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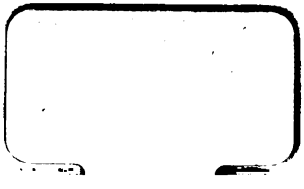

THE

ELEMENTS

OF

ENGLISH COMPOSITION.

CONTAINING

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTIONS

FOR

WRITING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE WITH PERSPICUITY AND ELEGANCE.

DESIGNED, IN THE PROGRESS OF EDUCATION, TO SUCCEED TO THE STUDY OF ENGLISH GRAMMAR, AND OF THE LATIN AND GREEK CLASSICS.

BY DAVID IRVING, A. M.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY THOMAS L. PLOWMAN.

1803.

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TO THE REV.

THOMAS MARTIN, A. M.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE always entertained a hearty averſion to thoſe unmanly and fulſome ſtrains of panegyric, of which dedications have too frequently been compoſed. Human nature ſeldom appears more unamiable than when it ſtoops to ſuch ſelf-debaſement. At the ſhrine of adulation I intend to offer no incenſe. And although I were ſo mean as to adopt a different reſolution, it is to be preſumed, that your good-ſenſe would prevent me from carrying it into effect.

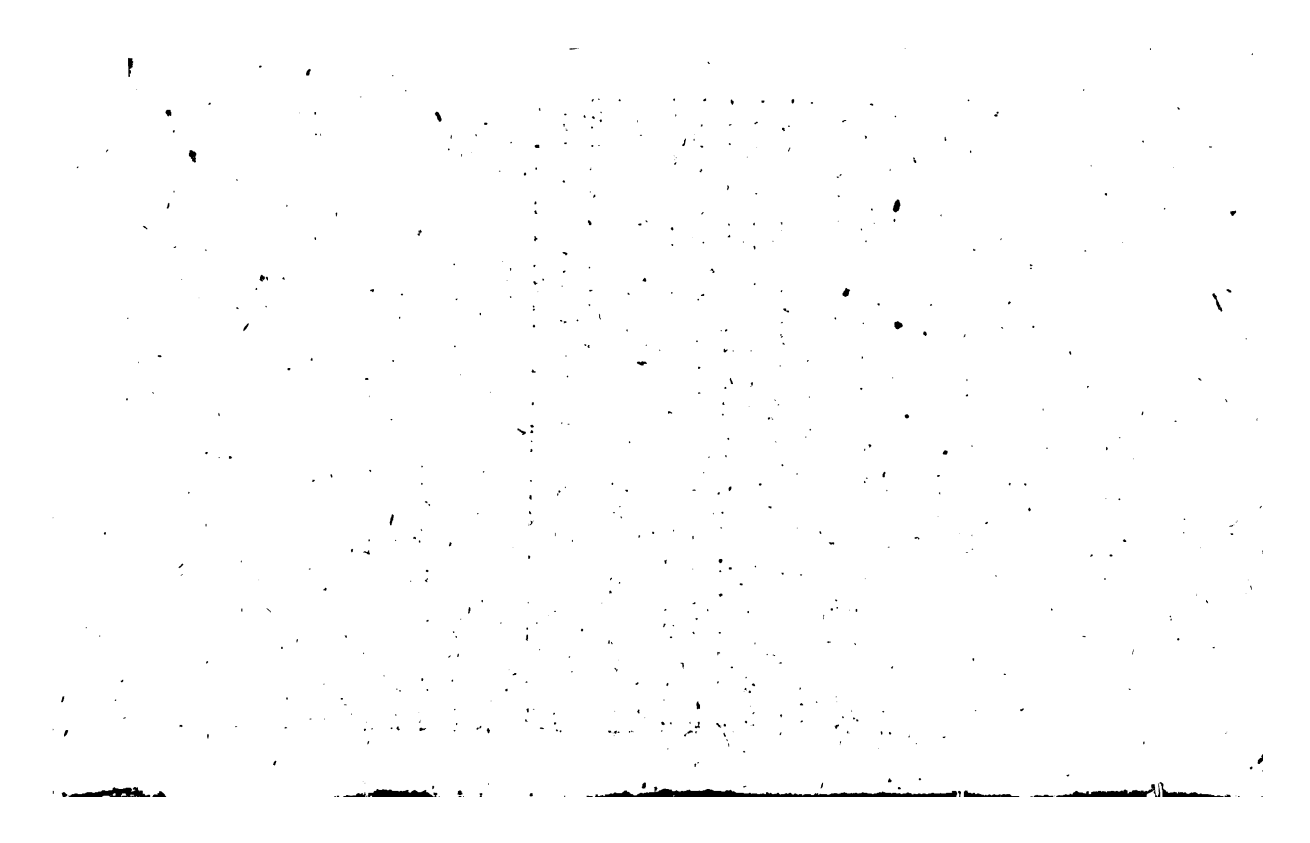
Let me however be permitted to declare, that ſmall as ſuch a favour may be deemed, I ſhould never have thought of inſcribing this little work to one for whoſe character I did not entertain a moſt cordial eſteem.

I remain,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend,

DAVID IRVING.



PREFACE.

THE work now preſented to the public is chiefly intended for the peruſal of thoſe whoſe critical ſtudies are yet in their commencement. To younger ſtudents, and to ſuch as have not acceſs to more extenſive works, it may perhaps convey ſome uſeful inſtruction. It is not intruded upon thoſe who are already converſant in polite literature. Should it be found a ſuitable introduction to this liberal ſtudy, the compiler will have attained the ſummit of his ambition.

Though it was my principal object to treat of proſe compoſition, yet a few obſervations on poetry incidentally occur. The remarks which have been ſuggeſted with regard to the nature of figurative language, apply equally to proſe and to poetry: but the poets have furniſhed me with the moſt copious and beautiful illuſtrations.

The rules of criticiſm are more ſucceſsfully inculcated by particular examples than by general precepts. I have therefore endeavoured to collect abundance of appoſite quotations, in order to illuſtrate every branch of the ſubject. In many inſtances this was an eaſy taſk: but in the claſſification of the different characters of ſtyle, it was attended with the utmoſt difficulty. To refer the compoſitions of an author to a particular claſs, and produce examples from them in ſupport of this deciſion, will always be found a hazardous attempt. Of this circumſtance Cicero and Quinctilian ſeem to have been fully aware. In treating of the general character of a writer's ſtyle, they content themſelves with referring to the body of his works, in confirmation of their ſentence. To ſuch exemplifications as occur in the following treatiſe, they have never had recourſe.

Without pretending to queſtion the propriety of their method, it may be preſumed, that to the claſs of

readers for whoſe peruſal theſe *Elements of Engliſh Compoſition* are chiefly intended, a different mode of procedure may perhaps be attended with ſome advantage. It is of importance for the ſtudent to be in ſome meaſure acquainted with the ſtyle of every author of eminence. The variety of examples exhibited in the courſe of the work will, at leaſt in this view, be found acceptable. Should they fail in their primary deſign, they may thus be rendered ſubſervient to another purpoſe.

To illuſtrate the progreſſive improvement of Engliſh compoſition, I have ſubjoined a variety of quotations from eminent authors. They are arranged nearly according to the priority of publication in the works from which they are ſelected. This ſelection commences where Johnſon's cloſes.* It includes all the moſt diſtinguiſhed writers of our own times, except thoſe who ſtill live to enjoy the reputation which their talents have ſecured.

The volume concludes with a few miſcellaneous obſervations on epiſtolary writing. To be able to maintain a friendly correſpondence with propriety and elegance, is aſſuredly a very deſirable accompliſhment. This branch of compoſition ought therefore to be aſſiduouſly cultivated, eſpecially by every younger ſtudent.

It may perhaps be alleged, that in my critical ſtrictures I have often betrayed too much ſeverity of cenſure, and that in general I have been too ſolicitous to expoſe the faults of eminent writers. But let it be remembered, that in a work of this kind it was neceſſary to expoſe defects, as well as to extol beauties. Thoſe errors which have received the ſanction of great names are always dangerous. They frequently become the object of abſurd imitation.

"Je ſais," ſays Condillac on a like occaſion, "qu'on trouvera mes critiques bien ſeveres; et que la plupart

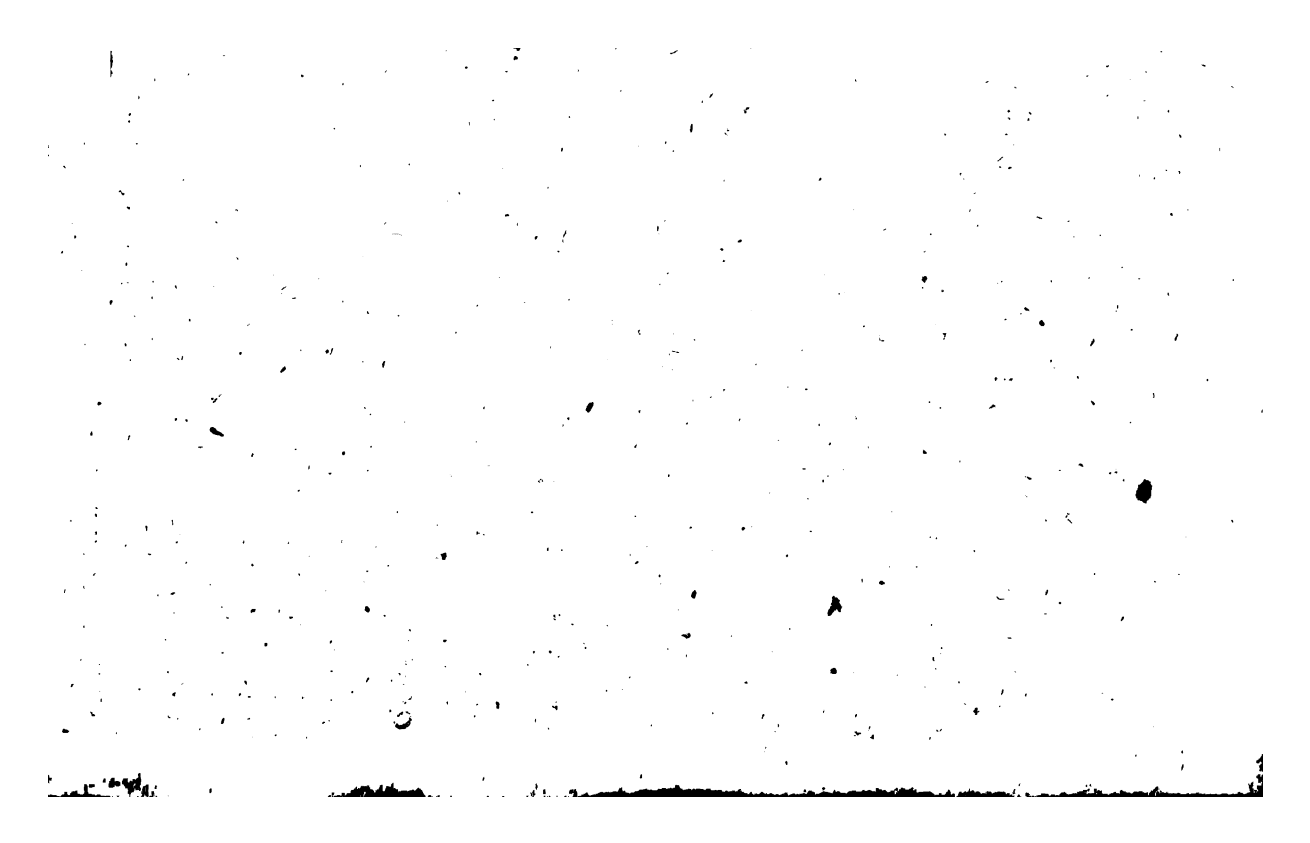
* Johnſon's Hiſtory of the Engliſh Language.

des paſſages que je blame ne manqueront pas de defenſeurs. L'art de l'écrire eſt un champ de diſputes, parce qu'au lieu d'en chercher les principes dans le caractere des penſees, nous les prenons dans notre gout; c'eſt-a-dire, dans nos habitudes de ſentir, de voir, et de juger; habitudes qui varient ſuivant le temperament des perſonnes, leur condition, et leur age."*

Towards living merit I am unconſcious of having been guilty of the ſlighteſt inſtance of diſreſpect. If I have occaſionally taken the liberty of pointing out a few trivial errors, this circumſtance can afford no reaſonable cauſe of offence. In exhibiting examples of the faults, as well as of the beauties, of compoſition, I have invariably had recourſe to ſuch works as ſeemed in ſome reſpects entitled to praiſe. If I have not treated living authors with all the delicacy and tenderneſs which has been recommended by St. Real,† I have at leaſt refrained from every wanton attack.

In the following pages the reader needs not expect to diſcover any originality of obſervation. I deſire to be regarded in no other view than that of a mere compiler. Concerning every critical ſubject that has fallen under my review, I have endeavoured to collect the moſt rational opinions of writers diſtinguiſhed for their learning and judgment. For any valuable inſtructions which this compilation may chance to exhibit, the reader is principally indebted to Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric*, Kames's *Elements of Criticism*, Melmoth's *Letters of Fitzosborne*, and Lowth's *Introduction to Engliſh Grammar*. To other occaſional ſources of information I have been careful to make the proper references: but when I availed myſelf of the treaſures amaſſed by theſe excellent writers, I forbore to quote their names: "not that I might appropriate their labours or uſurp their honours, but that I might ſpare a perpetual repetition by one general acknowledgment."

* Condillac, Traite de 'Art d'Ecrire, liv. ii. chap. i.
† St. Real de la Critique.



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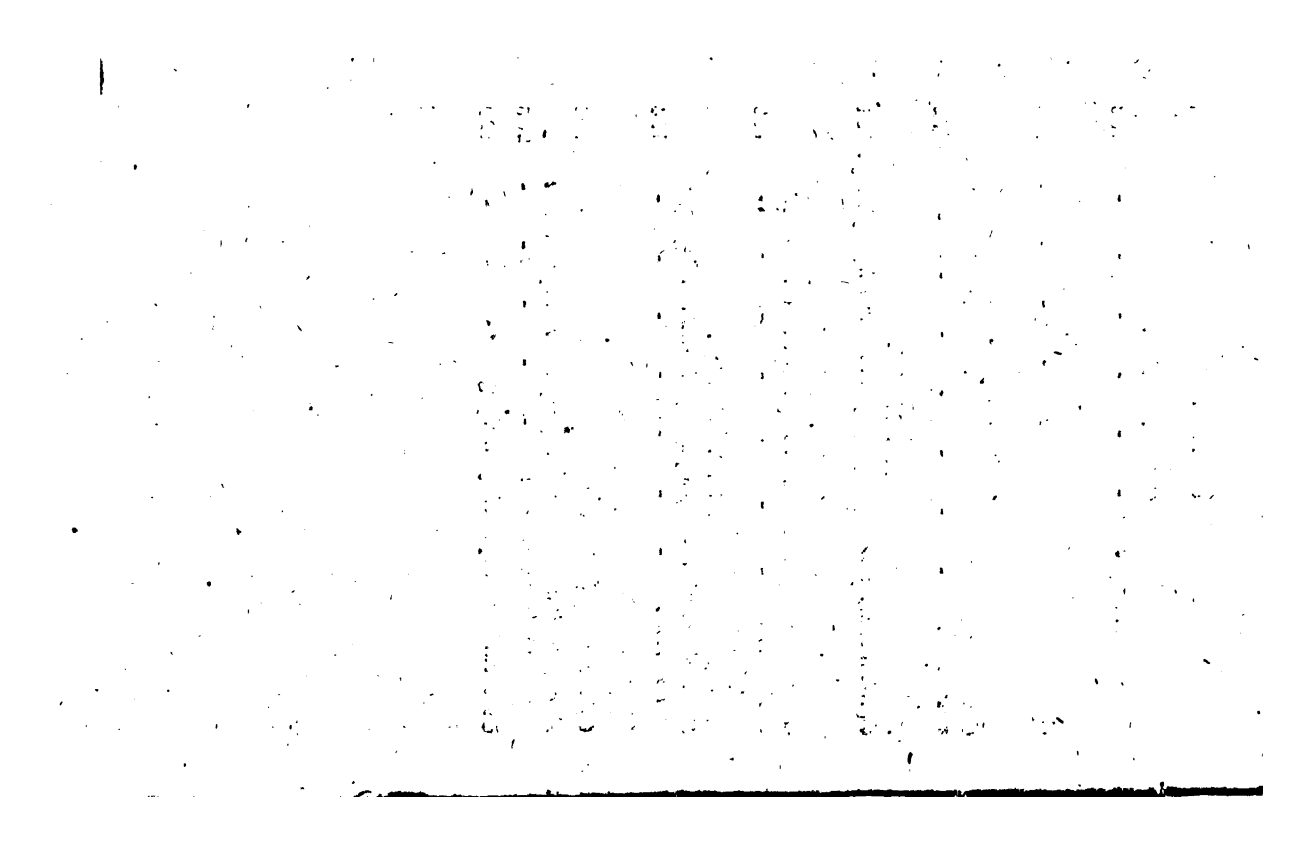

ELEMENTS

OF

ENGLISH COMPOSITION.

CHAP. I. Introductory.

THE great and important object of language is, to expreſs the various wants and affections of thoſe by whom it is ſpoken. In the earlieſt ſtages of civil ſociety, man is contented with ſuch comforts as are eaſily procured, and the operations of the human mind are circumſcribed within narrow limits. His vocabulary is conſequently ſcanty, though, at the ſame time, it may be fully adequate to every purpoſe to which it is applied. But as luxury and refinement advance in their gradual progreſs, the language of the community becomes more copious and elegant: it not only overſteps its ancient boundaries, but haſtens to lay aſide its ancient rudeneſs and barbarity. Material improvements, however, cannot be introduced by any ſudden exertion; they muſt be the reſult of that experience, which a length of time only can beſtow.

Before the elegancies of literature can lay claim to any conſiderable ſhare of attention, a ſpirit of general improvement muſt have begun to pervade the ſtate. Accordingly we find that vigour and originality of thought have always preceded beauty and accuracy of expreſſion. In the firſt efforts of untutored genius, the harmony of periods is little regarded; ſuch words as moſt readily occur to the recollection of the writer, are almoſt indiſcriminately adopted; and theſe are generally arranged without much attention to elegance or propriety.

Thus if we take a retroſpective view of Engliſh literature at no very remote period, we ſhall often find the beauty of the thought obſcured by the meanneſs of the expreſſion. Its pages are frequently deformed with uncouthneſs and vulgarity. Nor is it altogether untainted with theſe faults in its preſent ſtate. It would be difficult to point out a ſolitary inſtance of an Engliſh book wholly free from vulgar expreſſions and grammatical errors.

Propriety and beauty of ſtyle ſeem often to have been conſidered as below the attention both of an author and a reader. The ancients, however, regarded this ſubject in a different point of view. To be ſkilled in their native tongue, was eſteemed among the number of the politeſt accompliſhments. Julius Cæſar, who was not only a great warrior but alſo a man of faſhion, was deſirous of adding this accompliſhment to his other ſhining qualities: and we are informed that he ſtudied the language of his own country with much application, as we are ſure he poſſeſſed it in the higheſt degree of purity and elegance. The literary world cannot ſufficiently regret that the treatiſe which he wrote upon this ſubject, has periſhed along with many other valuable works of the ſame age. But, although we are deprived of the benefit of his obſervations, we are happily in poſſeſſion of an illuſtrious inſtance of their effects; and his own *Commentaries* will ever remain as the brighteſt exemplar not only of true generalſhip, but alſo of fine writing. He publiſhed them, indeed, only as materials for the uſe of thoſe who might be diſpoſed to enlarge upon that remarkable period of the Roman Hiſtory: yet the purity and gracefulneſs of his ſtyle are ſuch, that no judicious writer afterwards dared to attempt the ſame ſubject.

Cicero frequently mentions as a very high encomium, that the celebrated Roman orators poſſeſſed the elegance of their native language.* He introduces Brutus declaring, that he ſhould prefer the honour of being eſteemed the great maſter and improver of Roman eloquence, even to the glory of many triumphs.

Beauty of compoſition tends to heighten the native charms of truth; it therefore ought never to be regarded as an object of ſmall importance.—But it may be alledged, that truth does not require the aid of foreign ornament. It is not indeed neceſſary, that ſhe ſhould be exhibited in a glaring habit; but ſhe ought certainly to be cloathed with decency and propriety. A beautiful woman, in careleſs and ſordid apparel, can never appear to great advantage.

To Locke, Cudworth, Clarke, and Butler, philoſophy owes the moſt ſerious obligations; but would thoſe great authors have diminiſhed the utility of their literary labours by

* Cicero, de Claris Oratoribus.

employing more smooth and polished language? Quite the reverse. Never, indeed, does the force of reason more effectually subdue the human mind then when she is supported by the powerful assistance of manly eloquence: as on the contrary, the most legitimate arguments may be rendered unavailing by being attended with a feeble and unanimated expression. There is as much difference between comprehending a thought cloathed in the language of Cicero, and that of an ordinary writer, as there is between viewing an object by the light of the sun and by the light of a taper.

Malebranche has assuredly fallen into a very strange conceit when he insinuates, that the pleasure arising from the perusal of a beautiful composition is of a criminal nature, and has its source in the weakness and effeminacy of the human mind. That man must possess a very uncommon severity of temper, who can find any thing to condemn in the practice of embellishing truth with additional charms, and winning the heart by captivating the ear; in uniting roses with the thorns of science, and joining pleasure with instruction.

The mind is delighted with a fine style upon the same principle that it prefers regularity to confusion, and beauty to deformity. A taste for the beauties of composition is so far from being a mark of any depravity of our nature, that I should rather be inclined to consider it as an evidence of the moral rectitude of our mental constitution, since it furnishes a direct proof that we retain some relish of order and harmony.

No object has ever appeared of greater importance to wise men, than to tincture the young and susceptible mind with an early relish for the pleasures of taste. Easy in general is the transition from the pursuit of these to the discharge of the higher and more important duties of life. Sanguine hopes may be entertained of those whose minds have this liberal and elegant turn. It is favourable to the growth of many virtues: whereas, to be devoid of taste for the fine arts, is justly regarded as an unpromising symptom in youth, and raises suspicions of their being prone to low gratifications, or destined to drudge in the more vulgar and illiberal pursuits of life. There are few good dispositions of any kind with which the improvement of this faculty is not in some degree connected. A cultivated taste increases sensibility to all the tender and humane passions, by giving them frequent exercise; while, on the other hand, it tends to weaken the

more violent and fierce emotions, by exciting in us a livelier ſenſe of decorum.

From theſe obſervations it will appear, that the charge of Malebranche is not only ill-founded, but abſolutely ridiculous. One would however be apt to ſuſpect, that certain writers among us had conſidered the ſubject in the ſame gloomy point of view; or at leaſt that they had ſtudiouſly avoided every refinement in ſtyle, as unbecoming a lover of truth and wiſdom. Their ſentiments are debaſed by the loweſt expreſſions: they ſeem condemned to the curſe of *creeping upon the ground all the days of their life.*

But there is another extreme, which ought alſo to be carefully avoided. Language may be too pompous, as well as too mean. Some authors miſtake pomp for dignity; and with the view of raiſing their expreſſions above vulgar language, elevate them above common apprehenſion. They ſeem to conſider it as a mark of their genius, that it requires ſome ingenuity to diſcover their meaning. But when their meaning is diſcovered, it ſeldom repays the labour of the ſearch.

CHAP. II.

OF PURITY OF STYLE.

STYLE has been defined to be the peculiar manner in which a man expreſſes his conceptions through the medium of language. It differs from mere language or words. Though the words which an author employs, be unexceptionable, yet his ſtyle may be chargeable with great faults; it may be dry, ſtiff, feeble, affected. The ſtyle of an author is always intimately connected with his manner of thinking. It is a picture of the ideas which ariſe in his mind, and of the manner in which they do ariſe. Hence the difficulty of drawing an exact line of ſeparation between the ſtyle and the ſentiment.

All that can be required of language is to convey our ideas clearly to the minds of others, and, at the ſame time, to clothe them in an advantageous dreſs. The two general heads of perſpicuity and ornament, therefore, comprehend all

the qualities of a good ſtyle. Perſpicuity demands our chief care; for, without this quality, the richeſt ornaments of language only glimmer through the dark; and puzzle, inſtead of pleaſing, the reader. An author's meaning ought always to be obvious, even to the moſt careleſs and inattentive reader; ſo that it may ſtrike his mind, as the light of the ſun ſtrikes our eyes, though they are not directed towards it. We muſt ſtudy, not only that every reader may underſtand us, but that it ſhall be impoſſible for him not to underſtand us. If we are obliged to follow a writer with much care, to pauſe, and to read over his ſentences a ſecond time, in order to comprehend them fully, he will never pleaſe us long. Mankind are too indolent to reliſh ſo much labour. They may pretend to admire the author's depth, after they have diſcovered his meaning; but they will ſeldom be inclined to beſtow upon his work a ſecond peruſal.

In treating of perſpicuity of ſtyle, it will be proper, in the firſt place, to direct our attention to ſingle words and phraſes, and afterwards to the conſtruction of ſentences.

Perſpicuity, conſidered with reſpect to words and phraſes, requires the qualities of purity, propriety, and preciſion. The two firſt of theſe are often confounded with each other: and, indeed, they are very nearly allied. A diſtinction, however, obtains between them. Purity of ſtyle conſiſts in the uſe of ſuch words, and ſuch conſtructions, as belong to the idiom of the language which we uſe; in oppoſition to words and phraſes which are imported from other languages, or that are obſolete, or new-coined, or uſed without proper authority. Propriety of ſtyle conſiſts in the ſelection of ſuch words, as the beſt and moſt eſtabliſhed uſage has appropriated to thoſe ideas which we employ them to expreſs. It implies the correct and happy application of them, according to that uſage, in oppoſition to vulgariſms, or low expreſſions; and to words and phraſes that would be leſs ſignificant of the ideas which we intend to convey. Style may be pure, that is, it may be ſtrictly Engliſh, without Scotticiſms or Gallicíſms, or ungrammatical and unwarranted expreſſions of any kind, and may, nevertheleſs, be deficient in propriety.* The words

* In this chapter it was propoſed to enumerate ſuch Scotticiſms as moſt frequently occur; but the compiler has not yet collected a ſufficient number of examples from writers of

may be unskilfully chosen, not adapted to the subject, nor fully expressive of the author's sentiments. He may have taken his words and phrases from the general mass of the English language; but his selection may happen to be injudicious.

Purity may justly be denominated grammatical truth. It consists in the conformity of the expression to the sentiment which the writer intends to convey; as moral truth consists in the conformity of the sentiment intended to be conveyed, to the sentiment actually entertained; and logical truth in the conformity of the sentiment to the nature of things. The opposite to logical truth, is error; to moral truth, a lie; to grammatical truth, a solecism.

The only standard by which the conformity implied in grammatical truth must be ascertained in every language, is the authorised, national, and present use of that language.

Grammatical errors, foreign idioms, and obsolete or new-coined words, were mentioned as inconsistent with purity of style. It will not be improper to collect a few hints concerning each of these faults.

I. GRAMMATICAL ERRORS.

It is not in consequence of any peculiar irregularity or difficulty inherent in the English language, that the general practice both of speaking and writing it is chargeable with inaccuracy. That inaccuracy proceeds rather from its simplicity and facility; circumstances which are apt to persuade us, that a grammatical study of our native tongue is altogether superfluous.* Were the language less easy and simple, we should find ourselves under a necessity of studying it with greater care and attention. But we commonly take for

established reputation. The reader may peruse the respective tracts of Sir John Sinclair, Dr. Beattie, and Mr. Mitchell.

* Another will say, it wanteth grammar. Nay, truly, it hath that praise, that it wants not grammar; for grammar it might have, but it needs it not, being so easy in itself, and so void of those cumbersome difference of cases, genders, moods, and tenses; which, I think, was a piece of the tower of Babylon's curse, that a man should be put to school to learn his mother tongue. *Sidney's Defence of Poesy.*

granted, that we poſſeſs a competent knowledge of it, and are able on any occaſion to apply our knowledge to practice. A faculty, ſolely acquired by uſe, conducted by habit, and tried by the ear, carries us on without the labour of reflexion; we meet with no obſtacles in our progreſs, or we do not perceive them; we find ourſelves able to proceed without rules, and we never ſuſpect that they may be of any uſe.

A grammatical ſtudy of our own language forms no part of the ordinary courſe of inſtruction; and we ſeldom apply to it of our own accord. This however is a deficiency which no other advantages can ſupply. Much practice in the polite world, and a general acquaintance with the beſt authors, muſt undoubtedly be conſidered as excellent helps; but even theſe will hardly be ſufficient. A critical knowledge of ancient languages, and an intimate acquaintance with ancient authors, will be found ſtill leſs adequate to the purpoſe. Bentley, the greateſt critic and moſt able grammarian of the age in which he lived, was notoriouſly deficient in the knowledge of his native tongue.

Grammatical errors are ſo plentifully ſcattered over the pages of our claſſical writers, that it will be no difficult taſk to ſelect a ſufficient number of inſtances.

I. *Grammatical errors in the uſe of Pronouns.*

We contributed a third more than the Dutch, who were obliged to the ſame proportion more than *us*.

Swift's conduct of the Allies.

King Charles, and more than *him*, the duke, and the popiſh faction, were at liberty to form new ſchemes.

Bolingbroke's Diſſertation on Parties.

Phalaris, who was ſo much older than *her*.

Bentley's diſſertation on Phalaris.

The lover got a woman of greater fortune than *her* he had miſſed.

Addiſon, Guardian.

The drift of all his ſermons was, to prepare the Jews for the reception of a prophet, mightier than *him*, and whoſe ſhoes he was not worthy to bear.

Atterbury's Sermons.

If the king gives us leave, you or I may as lawfully preach, as *them* that do.

Hobbes's Hiſtory of Civil Wars.

In all these examples, the nominative cases of the pronouns ought to have been used. This will more plainly appear from the following resolution of the first illustration: "We contributed a third more than the Dutch, who were obliged to the same proportion more than *we* were obliged to."

Who is the poet but lately arrived in Elysium, whom I saw Spencer lead in, and present *him* to Virgil?
Lyttleton's Dialogues of the Dead.

The pronoun *him* is here redundant and improper; the accusative "*whom*" being understood to be repeated before the verb "*present*," as it would in fact be if the sentence were written at full length without ellipsis, thus—"whom I saw Spencer lead in, and *whom I saw Spencer*, present to Virgil."

We are alone; here's none but *thee* and I. *Shakespear.*

Instead of *thee*, it should be *thou*.

For ever in this humble cell,
Let thee and *I*, my fair one, dwell. *Prior.*

The construction requires *me* instead of *I*.

He, *whom* ye pretend reigns in heaven, is so far from protecting the miserable sons of men, that he perpetually delights to blast the sweet flowrets in the garden of hope.
Hawkesworth's Adventurer.

It ought to be *who*, the nominative case to *reigns* (i. e. *who reigns*, as ye pretend); not *whom*, as if it were the accusative or objective case governed by *pretend*.

Whom do men say that I am. *St. Matthew.*

Whom think ye, that I am. *Acts of the Apostles.*

In both these passages it ought to be *who*; which is not governed by the verb *say* or *think*, but by the verb *am*.

These feasts were celebrated to the honour of Osiris, *whom* the Grecians called Dionysius, and *is* the same with Bacchus.
Swift on the Mechan. Oper. of the Spirit.

Here the relative pronoun of the objective case must be understood as the nominative to the verb *is*. The passage ought to have stood thus: "These feasts were celebrated to the honour of Osiris, whom the Grecians called Dionysius, and *who* is the same with Bacchus."

Who should I meet at the coffee-house t'other night, but my old friend? *Steele, Spectator.*

It is another pattern of this answer's fair dealing, to give us hints that the author is dead, and yet to lay the suspicion upon somebody, I know not *who*, in the country.

Swift's Tale of a Tub.

Here the construction requires *whom*.

Some writers have used *ye* as the objective case plural of the pronoun *thou*. This is an infringement of the rules of grammar.

His wrath, which one day will destroy *ye* both. *Milton.*

The more shame for *ye*; holy men I thought *ye*.

Shakespear.

But tyrants dread *ye*, lest your just decree
Transfer the power, and set the people free. *Prior.*

This mode of expression may perhaps be allowed in the comic and burlesque style, which often imitates a vulgar and incorrect pronunciation. But in the serious and solemn style, no authority is sufficient to justify so manifest a solecism.

Though compassion in real war may make the ruinous practice less delightful, it is certain, that in the literate warring world, the springing of mines, and blowing up of towers, bastions and ramparts of philosophy, with systems, hypotheses, opinions, and doctrines, into the air, is a spectacle of all *other* the most naturally rejoicing.

Shaftesbury's Miscellaneous Reflections.

Here the adjective *other* is improperly put in the singular number.

I heard it first observed by an ingenious and learned old gentleman lately deceased, that many of Mr. Hobbs *his* seeming new opinions are gathered from those which Sextus Empiricus exposed. *Dryden's Life of Plutarch.*

My paper is Ulysses *his* bow, in which every man of wit or learning may try his strength. *Addison, Guardian.*

This by the calumniators of Epicurus *his* philosophy was objected as one of the most scandalous of all their sayings.

Cowley's Essays.

The pronoun *his* is here put to denote the poſſeſſive caſe of the noun which it accompanies. The writers have erroneouſly imagined, that the *'s* which generally marks this caſe, is a contraction of the poſſeſſive pronoun; whereas it is only a contraction of the pure ancient Saxon genitive termination *es*, which is ſtill retained in the German language, as *ein mann (a man)*, *eines mannes (of a man*, or *a man's)*—*der engel, (the angel)*, *des engels (of the angel*, or *the angel's)*.

2. *Grammatical Errors in the Uſe of Verbs.*

And Rebekah took goodly *raiment* of her eldeſt ſon Eſau, which *were* with her in the houſe, and put them upon Jacob her youngeſt ſon. *Geneſis.*

The *number* of the names together *were* about an hundred and twenty. *Acts of the Apoſtles.*

I have conſidered *what have* been ſaid on both ſides of the controverſy. *Tillotſon's Sermons.*

If the blood of bulls, and of goats, and the aſhes of an heifer, ſprinkling the unclean, *ſanctifieth* to the purifying of fleſh, how much more ſhall the blood of Chriſt purge your conſcience from dead works!

St. Paul's Epiſtle to the Hebrews.

One would think there *was* more *ſophiſts* than one had a finger in this volume of letters.

Bentley's Diſſert. on Socrates's Epiſtles.

There *'s two* or *three* of us have ſeen ſtrange ſights.

Shakſpear.

Theſe inſtances require no elucidation: the reader will eaſily perceive where the error lies.

Knowing that *you was* my old maſter's good friend, I could not forbear ſending you the melancholy news of his death.

Addiſon, Spectator.

I am juſt now as well as when *you was* here.

Pope's Letters.

Deſire this paſſionate lover to give you a character of his miſtreſs, he will tell you, that he is at a loſs for words to

deſcribe her charms, and will ask you ſeriouſly, if ever *you was* acquainted with a goddeſs or an angel. *Hume's Eſſays.*

Many other writers of no ſmall reputation make uſe of this form of expreſſion: it is, however, improper and ungrammatical. As the word *you* is confeſſedly plural, its correſpondent verb, agreeably to the analogy of all languages, ought alſo to be plural, viz. *you were*, whether the diſcourſe be addreſſed to a ſingle perſon or to more than one. Nevertheleſs, many other writers of no ſmall reputation have uſed the ungrammatical expreſſion *you was*, which is equally improper as if a king, after having begun with the plural *we*, ſhould put the verb in the ſingular, and ſay "*we am.*" Beſides, even if the ſingular were at all admiſſible after *you*, there would ſtill be a violation of grammar in *was*, which is confined to the firſt and third perſons; the ſecond being *waſt*. But, in the preſent tenſe, nobody ever attempts to join the ſingular verb with *you*, though he ſpeak to a ſingle perſon; univerſal practice, as well as grammatical propriety, teaching us to ſay *you are*, not *you am*, *you art*, or *you is*.

Thou hangman, thou temple robber, thou clod of earth, from what brothel *did thou come* up in patins, muffled up, with thy breath ſmelling of the ſtews?

Arbuthnot on the Scolding of the Ancients.

Thou great Firſt Cauſe, leaſt underſtood,
Who all my ſenſe *confin'd*
To know but this, that thou art good,
And that myſelf am blind;
Yet *gave* me, in this dark eſtate,
To ſee the good from ill;
And, binding Nature faſt in fate,
Left free the human will. *Pope.*

Nor thou, lord Arthur, ſhalt eſcape;
To thee I often call'd in vain,
Againſt that aſſaſſin in crape;
Yet *thou* couldeſt tamely ſee me ſlain;
Nor, when I felt the dreadful blow,
Or *chid* the dean, or *pinch'd* his ſpouſe. *Swift.*

To correſpond with the pronoun *thou*, all theſe verbs ought to have been in the ſecond perſon ſingular; inſtead of which, they are put in the ſecond perſon plural, as if they correſponded with the pronoun *you*. Writers generally have

A free conſtitution, when it has been *shook* by the iniquity of former adminiſtrations.

Bolingbroke's Idea of a Patriot King.

He is God in his friendſhip as well as his nature, and therefore we ſinful creatures are not *took* upon advantages, nor conſumed in our provocations. *South's Sermons.*

Which ſome philoſophers, not conſidering ſo well as I, have miſtook to be different in their cauſes.

Swift's Tale of a Tub.

The greater regard was *shew'd*, and the expectations rais'd higher, as theſe were of a baſe nature, or of a more noble, thriving, or innocent quality. *Arbuthnot's Congress of Bees.*

Moſes tells us, that the fountains of the earth were *broke* open, or *clove* aſunder. *Burnet's Theory of the Earth.*

I eaſily foreſee, that, as ſoon as I lay down my pen, this nimble operator will have *stole* it. *Swift's Tale of a Tub.*

By this expedient, the public peace of libraries might certainly have been preſerved, if a new ſpecies of controverſial books had not *arose* of late years.

Swift's Battle of the Books.

The ſteps which lead to perfection are many; and we are at a loſs on whom to beſtow the greateſt ſhare of our praiſe; on the firſt or on the laſt who may have *bore* a part in the progreſs. *Ferguson on Civil Society.*

In theſe examples, the paſt time active is uſed inſtead of the perfect participle; but abundant inſtances in which the caſe is reverſed might alſo have been collected. This confuſion ſhould upon every occaſion be ſcrupulouſly avoided. The Engliſh language admits not of any great variety of termination; but of ſuch as it does admit, we ought always to avail ourſelves. It is certainly of advantage that the different modifications of verbs ſhould be properly diſtinguiſhed from each other.

Before we conclude this branch of the ſubject, it will be proper to warn the reader againſt permitting a verb to ſucceed a participle in ſuch an ungraceful manner as appears in the following paſſages:

The author is informed, that the bookſeller has prevailed on ſeveral gentlemen to write ſome explanatory notes, for the goodneſs of which he is not to anſwer; *having* never *ſeen* any of them, nor *intends* it, till they appear in print.
Swift's Tale of a Tub.

Nor is it then a welcome gueſt, *affording* only an uneaſy ſenſation, and *brings* always with it a mixture of concern and compaſſion. *Fielding's Essay on Conversation.*

4. Grammatical Errors in the use of Adjectives.

Adjectives which have a comparative or ſuperlative ſignification, do not admit the addition of the words *more*, *moſt*, or of the comparative or ſuperlative terminations *er*, *eſt*, The following paſſages, therefore, are liable to exception:

The laſt are, indeed, *more preferable*, becauſe they are founded on ſome new knowledge or improvement in the mind of man. *Addiſon, Spectator.*

The *chiefeſt* of which was known by the name of Archon among the Grecians. *Dryden's Life of Plutarch.*

The two *chiefeſt* properties of air, its gravity and elaſtic force, have been diſcovered by mechanical experiments.
Arbuthnot's Eſſay on Mathematical Learning.

The *chiefeſt* and largeſt are removed to certain magazines they call libraries. *Swift's Battle of the Books.*

The *extremeſt* parts of the earth were meditating a ſubmiſſion. *Atterbury's Sermons.*

Adjectives are ſometimes improperly uſed as adverbs:

I ſhall endeavour to live hereafter *ſuitable* to a man in my ſtation. *Addiſon's Spectator.*

The queen having changed her miniſtry *ſuitable* to her own wiſdom. *Swift's Examiner.*

He behaved himſelf *conformable* to that bleſſed example.
Sprat's Sermons.

His expectations run high; and the fund to ſupply them is *extreme* ſcanty. *Lancaster's Eſſay on Delicacy.*

I can never think ſo very *mean* of him.
Bentley's Diſſertation on Phalaris.

The art of pronouncing with propriety and grace, being calculated to make the ſound an echo to the ſenſe, *scarce* admits of any other general rule. *Kames's Elements of Criticism.*

In theſe examples, the idiom of the language requires the adverbs *suitably*, *conformably*, *extremely*, *meanly*, and *scarcely*.

5. *Grammatical Errors in the Uſe of Negative and Diſjunctive Particles.*

I impeach *neither* the characters of Cicero *or* Howard.
Dyer's Diſſertation on Benevolence.

That *neither* partiality *or* prejudice appear; but that truth may every where be ſacred. *Dryden's Life of Plutarch.*

There is another uſe, that in my opinion, contributes rather to make a man learned than wiſe, and is *neither* capable of pleaſing the underſtanding *or* imagination.
Addiſon on Medals.

Theſe, like a hand with an inſcription, can point out the ſtraight way upon the road, but can *neither* tell you the next turning, reſolve your doubts, *or* anſwer your queſtions, like a guide that has traced it over, and perhaps knows it as well as his chamber. *Temple on Ancient and Modern Learning.*

The legitimate correſpondent of *neither* is *nor*.

We need not, *nor* do *not*, confine the purpoſes of God.
Bentley's Sermons.

In the growth and ſtature of ſouls, as well as bodies, the common productions are of different ſizes, that occaſion no gazing, *nor no* wonder.
Temple on Ancient and Modern Learning.

I'll prove by twenty-five ſubſtantial reaſons, that you're no compoſer, *nor* know *no* more of muſick, than you do of algebra. *Arbuthnot, Harmony in an Uproar.*

Nor is danger ever apprehended in ſuch a government from the violence of the ſovereign, *no more* than we commonly apprehend danger from thunder or earthquakes.
Hume's Eſſays.

In each of theſe ſentences, there is a double negative, which amounts to an affirmative.

II. FOREIGN IDIOMS.

The uſe of ſuch conſtructions as belong to the idiom of another language, is, like every ſpecies of affectation, nauſeous and diſguſting*. An author may ſometimes happen to admit them through mere inadvertency; but he will more frequently have recourſe to them, in order to diſplay his erudition.

The king ſoon found reaſon to *repent him* of his provoking ſuch dangerous enemies. *Hume's History of England.*

The popular lords did not fail to *enlarge themselves* on the ſubject. *Macaulay's History of England.*

That Diodorus has not *mistook himself* in his account of the date of Phintia, we may be as ſure as any hiſtory can make us. *Bentley's Diſſertation on Phalaris.*

Solomon was of this mind; and I make no doubt, but he made as wiſe and true proverbs as any body has done ſince: *Him* only *excepted*, who was a much greater and wiſer man than Solomon. *Tillotson's Sermons.*

Removing the term from Weſtminſter, *sitting the parliament*, was illegal. *Macaulay's History of England.*

I ſhall here ſubjoin ſome examples of prepoſition, which, if not applied according to the idiom of other languages, are at leaſt applied contrary to the general uſage of our ſtandard writers.

The only actions *to* (upon) which we have always ſeen, and ſtill ſee all of them *intent*, are ſuch as lead to the deſtruction of one another.

Burke's Vindication of Natural Society.

* Dryden had a vanity, unworthy of his abilities, to ſhew, as may be ſuſpected, the rank of the company with whom he lived by the uſe of French words, which had then crept into converſation; ſuch as *fraicheur* for *coolness*, *fougue* for turbulence, and a few more, none of which the language has incorporated or retained. They continue only where they ſtood firſt, perpetual warnings to future innovators. *Johnson's Life of Dryden.*

To (with) which, as biſhop Burnet tells us, the prince of Orange was willing to comply.
Bolingbroke's Diſſertation on Parties.

He had been perplexed with a long compliance *to* (with) foreign manners. *Sprat's Life of Cowley.*

Your character, which I or any other writer, may now value ourſelves *by* (upon) drawing, will probably be dropt, on account of the antiquated ſtyle and manner they are delivered in. *Swift on the Engliſh Tongue.*

The diſcovery he made and communicated *with* (to) his friends. *Swift's Tale of a Tub.*

The people being only convoked upon ſuch occaſions, as by this inſtitution of Romulus, fell *into* (under) their cognizance.
Swift's Contests and Diſſentions in Athens and Rome.

Not from any perſonal hatred to them, but in juſtification *to* (of) the beſt of queens. *Swift, Examiner.*

The wiſeſt princes need not think it any diminution *to* (of) their greatneſs, or derogation *to* (from) their ſufficiency, to rely upon counſel. *Bacon's Eſſays.*

A ſupercilious attention to minute formalities, is a certain indication of a little mind, conſcious *to* (of) the want of innate dignity. *Hawkeſworth's Almoran and Hamet.*

He found the greateſt difficulty *of* (in) writing.
Hume's Hiſtory of England.

The eſteem which Philip had conceived *of* (for) the ambaſſador. *Ibid.*

The greateſt difficulty was found *of* (in) fixing juſt ſentiments. *Ibid.*

The Chriſtians were driven out of all their Aſiatic poſſeſſions, in acquiring *of* which *(in acquiring which)* incredible numbers of men had periſhed. *Robertſon's View of Society.*

You know the eſteem I have *of* (for) his philoſophy.
Kames's Law Tracts.

He is ſo reſolved *of* (on) going to the Perſian court.
Bentley's Diſſert. on Themiſtocles's Epiſtles.

Neither the one nor the other ſhall make me ſwerve *out of* (from) the path, which I have traced to myſelf.

Balingbroke's Letter to Wyndham.

I do likewiſe diſſent *with* (from) the Examiner.

Addiſon, Whig Examiner.

Dr. Johnſon (*with* (from) whom I am ſorry to differ in opinion) has treated it as a work of merit.

Scott's Critical Eſſays.

Ovid, whom ye accuſe *for* (of) luxuriancy of verſe.

Dryden on Dramatic Poeſy.

If policy can prevail *upon* (over) force, *Addiſon's Travels.*

This effect, we may ſafely ſay, no one beforehand could have promiſed *upon*. *Hume's Hiſtory of England.*

A greater quantity may be taken from the heap, without making any ſenſible alteration *upon* (in) it. *Hume's Eſſays.*

Every office of command ſhould be intruſted to perſons *on* (in) whom the parliament ſhall confide.

Macaulay's Hiſtory of England.

All which required abundance of fineſſe and delicateſſe to manage with advantage, as well as a ſtrict obſervance *after* (of) times and faſhions. *Swift's Tale of a Tub.*

The memory of lord Peter's injuries produced a degree of hatred and ſpite, which had a much greater ſhare *of* (in) inciting him, than any regards *after* (for) his father's commands.

Ibid.

It is uſual to ſpeak of a man's *abhorrence to* an object, and of his *averſion to* a meaſure: but theſe two words are more properly connected with the prepoſition *from*:

Her knowledge, her conjugal virtues, her *abhorrency from* the vanities of her ſex, and *from* ſuperſtition, her gravity in behaviour, and her conſtancy in ſupporting the loſs of children, are likewiſe celebrated by our author.

Dryden's Life of Plutarch.

Mankind are generally *averſe from* thinking, though apt enough to entertain diſcourſe either in themſelves or others.

Berkeley's Minute Philoſopher.

III. NEW-COINED AND OBSOLETE WORDS.

Upon this ſubject, I ſhall take the liberty of quoting a paſſage from Dr. Armſtrong, but without profeſſing to adopt all the opinions which it contains.

"It is the eaſieſt thing imaginable to coin new words. The moſt ignorant of the nobility are apt to do it every day, and are laughed at for it. What beſt can juſtify the introducing a new word, is neceſſity, where there is not an eſtabliſhed one to expreſs your meaning. But, while all the world underſtands what is meant by the word *pleasure*, which ſounds very well too, what occaſion can there be for ſaying *voluptly?*

"Nothing can deform a language ſo much as an inundation of new words and phraſes. It is, indeed, the readieſt way to demoliſh it. If there is any need to illuſtrate the barbarous effects which a mixture of new words muſt produce, only conſider how a diſcourſe, patched all over with ſentences in different languages, would ſound; or how oddly it would ſtrike you in a ſerious converſation to hear, from the ſame perſon, a mixture of all the various dialects and tones of the ſeveral counties of the three kingdoms; though it is ſtill the ſame language. To make it ſenſible to the eye; how greatly would a mixture of Roman, Italic, Greek, and Saxon characters deform a page! A picture imitating the ſtyle of different maſters, which is commonly called a Gallery of Painters, can never be pleaſing for the ſame reaſons, want of union and harmony.

"The preſent licentious humour of coining and borrowing words ſeems to portend no good to the Engliſh language; and it is grievous to think with what *volupty* two or *poetararoren couroac** eminent perſonages have *opiniatred* the *inchoation* of ſuch *futile* barbariſms.

"In ſhort, the liberty of coining words ought to be uſed with great modeſty. Horace, they ſay, gave but two, and Virgil only one to the Latin tongue, which was ſqueamiſh enough not to ſwallow thoſe, even from ſuch hands, without ſome reluctance.

"Inſtead of creating a parcel of awkward new words, I imagine it would be an improvement to degrade many of the

* An American word for the number *three*.

old ones from their peerage. I am but a private man, and without authority; but an abſolute prince, if he was of my opinion, would make it capital ever to ſay *encroach* or *encroachment*, or any thing that belongs to *encroaching*. I would commit *inculcate*, for all its Latinity, to the care of the pavioursſ; and it ſhould never appear above ground again. If you have the leaſt ſympathy with the human ear, never ſay *purport* while you breathe; nor *betwixt*, except you have firſt repeated *between* till we are quite tired of it. *Methinks* ſtrongly reſembles the broken language of a German in his firſt attempts to ſpeak Engliſh. *Methought* lies under the ſame objection, but it ſounds better.

"It is full time that *froward* ſhould be turned out of all good company, eſpecially as *perverse* is ready at hand to ſupply its place. *Vouchſafe* is a very civil gentleman; but as his courteſey is ſomewhat old-faſhioned, we wiſh he would *deign*, or *condeſcend*, or *be pleaſed* to retire.

"From what rugged road, I wonder, did *ſwerve deviate* into the Engliſh language?—But this *ſubject matter!*—In the name of every thing that is diſguſting and deteſtable, what is it? Is it one or two ugly words? What is it? Confound me if ever I could gueſs! Yet one dares hardly peep into a preface, for fear of being ſtared in the face with this naſty *ſubject matter.*"*

CHAP. III.

OF PROPRIETY OF STYLE.

PROPRIETY of ſtyle ſtands oppoſed to vulgariſms or low expreſſions, and to words and phraſes which would be leſs ſignificant of the ideas we mean to convey. An author may be deficient in propriety, either by making choice of ſuch words as do not expreſs the idea which he intends, but ſome other which only reſembles it; or ſuch as expreſs that idea, but not fully and completely. He may alſo be deficient in this reſpect by making choice of words or phraſes, which habit has taught us to regard as mean and vulgar.

* Armſtrong's Eſſays.

All that I propose in relation to this subject is, to collect a considerable number of vulgar phrases from the writings of different authors.

These and many other particulars might easily *choke* the faith of a philosopher, who believed no more than what he could deduce from the principles of nature.

Dryden's Life of Plutarch.

The kings of Syria and Egypt, the kings of Pergamus and Macedon without intermission, *worried* each other for above two hundred years. *Burke's Vindication of Natural Society.*

The memory of him and of them would have *stunk* together in the nostrils of mankind.

Bolingbroke's Dissertation on Parties.

Besides his having attained such a *mastery* in the Greek, Latin, and French languages, he is a very good philosopher, and, in general, possesses all the branches of erudition, except the mathematics. *Spence's Life of Blacklock.*

I need say no more concerning the *drift* of these letters.

Aikin's Letters to his Son.

Archbishop Tillotson is too often careless and languid; and is much *outdone* by bishop Atterbury, in the music of his periods. *Blair's Rhetoric.*

Every year a new flower in his judgment *beats* all the old ones, though it is much inferior to them both in colour and shape. *Mandeville on the Nature of Society.*

I am wonderfully pleased when I meet with any passage in an old Greek or Latin author, that is not *blown upon*, and which I have never met with in a quotation.

Addison, Spectator.

His name must *go down* to posterity with distinguished honour in the public records of the nation.

Hurd's Life of Warburton.

We enter into their gratitude towards those faithful friends who did not desert them in their difficulties: and we heartily *go along* with their resentment, against those perfidious traitors who injured, abandoned, or deceived them.

Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments.

This same grace is ſpoken of as the gift of God.
Berkeley's Minute Philoſopher.

Alarmed by the ungoverned, and, in him, unprecedented, emotions of Edgar, he *had been to* Beech Cark.
D'Arblay's Camilla.

It was but *of a piece*, indeed, that a ceremony conducted in defiance of humanity, ſhould be founded in contempt of juſtice. *Melmoth's Letter of Fitzoſborne.*

It ſo happened that a controverſy was agitated with great vehemence between thoſe friends of long continuance, Addiſon and Steele. *Johnſon's Life of Addiſon.*

It is well if the reader, without rejecting *by the lump*, endeavour patiently to gather the plain meaning.
Kaimes's Elements of Criticiſm.

Rabelais had too much *game* given him *for ſatire* in that age by the cuſtoms of courts and of convents, of proceſſes and of wars, of ſchools and of camps, of romances and legends. *Temple on Poetry.*

One would think there was *(were)* more ſophiſts than one *had a finger* in this volume of letters.
Bentley on Socrates's Epiſtles.

I had as lief ſay a thing after him as after another.
Lowth's Anſwer to Warburton.

If all theſe were exemplary in the conduct of their lives, things would ſoon *take a new face*, and religion receive a mighty encouragement.
Swift on the Advancement of Religion.

Nor would he do it to maintain debate, or ſhew his wit, but plainly tell me *what ſtuck with him.*
Burnet's Life of Rochester.

Content, therefore, I am, my lord, that Britain ſtands in this reſpect as ſhe now does. Able enough ſhe is at preſent *to ſhift for herſelf.*
Shaftesbury's Letter concerning Deſign.

Much ado there has been, many words ſpent, many diſputes have been raiſed upon this argument. *Temple on Poetry.*

What is it but a kind of rack that forces men *to ſay what they have no mind to?* *Cowley's Eſſays.*

A perfect union of wit and judgment is *one of the rarest things in the world.* *Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.*

This is one among the many reasons, which render biography *the most agreeable kind of reading in the world.* *Roberts, Looker-on.*

Another thing to be observed is, that the water of the abyss being in one vessel; the heat will diffuse itself uniformly through it all. *And a swinging quantity of heat it must be, that will set such a kettle a boiling.* *Arbuthnot's Examin. of Woodward's Account of the Deluge.*

Perhaps some of the above expressions may be rather deemed antiquated than low and vulgar: but to whatever class they may be referred, they are such as every writer ambitious of elegance ought studiously to avoid.

He therefore *made* rhyming tragedies, till, by the prevalence of manifest propriety, he seems to have grown ashamed of *making* them any longer. *Johnson's Life of Dryden.*

From that time he resolved to *make* no more translations. *Johnson's Life of Pope.*

It is my design to comprise in this short paper, the substance of those numerous dissertations the critics have *made* on the subject. *Pope's Discourse on Pastoral Poetry.*

A few reflections on the rise and progress of our distemper, and the rise and progress of our cure, will help us of course to *make* a true judgment. *Bolingbroke's Dissertation on the Passions.*

This application of the verb *make* is awkward, as well as familiar. To make tragedies, to make translations, to make dissertations, to make judgments, are expressions which should never be admitted into a serious discourse.

A vulgar expression, says Longinus, is sometimes much more significant than an elegant one.* This may readily be granted; but however significant it may be, no expression that has a tendency to create sensations of disgust, will, by a judicious writer, be thought worthy of admission.

The following quotation will serve to show how the most

* Longini de Sublimitate § xxxi.

beautiful deſcription of poetry may be deformed by the introduction of one low or vulgar expreſſion:

'Tis night, dread night, and weary Nature lies
So faſt as if ſhe never were to riſe;
No breath of wind now whiſpers through the trees,
No noiſe at land, nor murmur in the ſeas;
Lean wolves forget to howl at night's pale noon,
No wakeful dogs bark at the ſilent moon,
Nor bay the ghoſts that glide with horror by
To view the caverns where their bodies lie;
The ravens perch, and no preſages give,
Nor to the windows of the dying cleave;
The owls forget to ſcream; no midnight ſound
Calls drowſy Echo from the hollow ground;
In vaults the walking fires extinguiſhed lie;
The ſtars, heav'n's ſentries, *wink*, and ſeem to die. *Lee.*

CHAP. IV.

OF PRECISION OF STYLE.

THE third quality which enters into the compoſition of a perſpicuous ſtyle, is preciſion. This implies the retrenching of all ſuperfluity of expreſſion. A preciſe ſtyle exhibits an exact copy of the writer's ideas. To write with preciſion, though this be properly a quality of ſtyle, he muſt poſſeſs a very conſiderable degree of diſtinctneſs in his manner of thinking. Unleſs his own conceptions be clear and accurate, he cannot convey to the minds of others a clear and accurate knowledge of the ſubject which he treats.

Looſeneſs of ſtyle, which is properly oppoſed to preciſion, generally ariſes from uſing a ſuperfluity of words. Feeble writers employ a multitude of words to make themſelves underſtood, as they imagine, more diſtinctly: but, inſtead of accompliſhing this purpoſe, they only bewilder their readers. They are ſenſible that they have not caught an expreſſion calculated to convey their preciſe meaning; and therefore they endeavour to illuſtrate it by heaping together a maſs of ill-conſorted phraſes. The image which they endeavour to pre-

ſent to your mind, is always viewed double; and no double image can be viewed diſtinctly. When an author tells me of his hero's *courage* in the day of battle, the expreſſion is preciſe, and I underſtand it fully. But if, for the ſake of multiplying words, he ſhould afterwards extol his *fortitude*, my thoughts immediately begin to waver between theſe two attributes. In thus endeavouring to expreſs one quality more ſtrongly, he introduces another. *Courage* reſiſts danger; *fortitude* ſupports pain. The occaſion of each of theſe qualities is different; and being led to think of both together when only one of them ſhould be preſented to me, my view is rendered unſteady, and my conception of the great object indiſtinct.

An author may be perſpicuous, without being preciſe. He uſes proper words, and proper arrangements; but as his own ideas are looſe and general, he cannot expreſs them with any great degree of preciſion. Few authors in the Engliſh language are more clear and perſpicuous than Dr. Tillotſon and Sir William Temple; yet neither of theſe can pretend to much preciſion. They are looſe and diffuſe; and very often do not ſelect ſuch expreſſions as are adapted for conveying ſimply the idea they have in view: it is frequently aſſociated with ſome kindred notion.

All ſubjects do not require to be treated with the ſame degree of preciſion. It is requiſite that in every ſpecies of writing this quality ſhould in ſome meaſure be perceptible; but we muſt at the ſame time be upon our guard, leſt the ſtudy of preciſion, eſpecially in treating ſubjects which do not abſolutely require it, ſhould betray us into a dry and barren ſtyle; leſt, from the deſire of pruning more cloſely, we retrench all copiouſneſs and ornament. A deficiency of this kind may perhaps be remarked in the ſerious compoſitions of Swift.

To unite copiouſneſs with preciſion, to be flowing and graceful, and at the ſame time correct and exact in the choice of every word, is one of the higheſt and moſt difficult attainments in writing. Some ſpecies of compoſition may require more of copiouſneſs and ornament; others more of preciſion and accuracy: and even the ſame compoſition may, in different parts, require a difference of ſtyle. But theſe qualities muſt never be totally ſacrificed to each other.

"If I was to reduce my own private idea of the beſt language to a definition; I ſhould call it the ſhorteſt, cleareſt,

and eaſieſt way of expreſſing one's thoughts, by the moſt harmonious arrangement of the beſt choſen words, both for meaning and ſound. The beſt language is ſtrong and expreſſive, without ſtiffneſs or affectation; ſhort and conciſe, without being either obſcure or ambiguous; and eaſy and flowing and diſengaged, without one undetermined or ſuperfluous word*."

The want of preciſion is an unpardonable error in a writer who treats of philoſophical ſubjects. On this account, the ſtyle of Shafteſbury is highly exceptionable. That pedantic writer ſeems to have been well acquainted with the power of words: thoſe which he employs are generally proper and ſonorous; and his arrangement is often judicious. His defect, in preciſion, is not ſo much imputable to indiſtinctneſs of conception, as to perpetual affectation. He is fond to exceſs of the pomp and parade of language; he is never ſatisfied with expreſſing any thing clearly and ſimply; he muſt always give it the dreſs of ſtate and majeſty. Afraid of delivering his thoughts arrayed in a mean and ordinary garb, and allured by an appearance of ſplendour, he heaps together a crowd of ſuperfluous words, and inundates every idea which he means to expreſs with a torrent of copious loquacity. Hence perpetual circumlocutions, and many words and phraſes employed to deſcribe what would have much better been deſcribed by one alone. If he has occaſion to introduce any author, he very rarely mentions him by his proper name. In the treatiſe, intitled *Advice to an Author*, he employs two or three ſucceſſive pages in deſcanting upon Ariſtotle, without naming him in any other manner, than as "the Maſter Critic," "the Prince of Critics," "the Conſummate Philologiſt," "the Grand Maſter of Art," "the Mighty Genius and Judge of Art." In the ſame manner, "the Grand Poetic Sire," "the Philoſophical Patriarch," and "his Diſciple of noble birth, and lofty Genius," are the only names by which he condeſcends to deſignate Homer, Socrates, and Plato. This method of diſtinguiſhing perſons is extremely affected; but it is not ſo contrary to preciſion, as the frequent circumlocutions which he employs to expreſs the powers and affections of the mind. In one paſſage, he denominates the moral faculty, "that natural affection,

* Armſtrong's Eſſays.

and anticipating fancy, which makes the ſenſe of right and wrong." When he has occaſion to mention ſelf-examination, or reflection on his own conduct, he ſpeaks of it as the act of "a man dividing himſelf into two parties, becoming a ſelf-dialogiſt, entering into partnerſhip with himſelf, and forming the dual number practically within himſelf."—Contemptibe pedantry!

In the following paragraph he wiſhes to ſhow, that, by every vicious action, we injure the mind, as much as a man would injure his body by ſwallowing poiſon, or inflicting on himſelf a wound.

Now, if the fabric of the mind or temper appeared to us ſuch as it really is; if we ſaw it impoſſible to remove hence any one good or orderly affection, or to introduce any ill or diſorderly one, without drawing on, in ſome degree, that diſſolute ſtate which, at its height, is confeſſed to be ſo miſerable; it would then, undoubtedly, be confeſſed, that ſince no ill, immoral, or unjuſt action, can be committed, without either a new inroad and breach on the temper and paſſions, or a further advancing of that execution already done; whoever did ill, or acted in prejudice of his integrity, good-nature, or worth, would, of neceſſity, act with greater cruelty towards himſelf, than he who ſcrupled not to ſwallow what was poiſonous, or who, with his own hands, ſhould voluntarily mangle or wound his outward form or conſtitution, natural limbs or body.

Shafteſbury's Inquiry concerning Virtue.

Such ſuperfluity of words is diſguſting to every reader of a correct taſte; and produces no other effect than that of embarraſſing and perplexing the ſenſe. To commit a bad action is, firſt, "to remove a good and orderly affection, and to introduce an ill or diſorderly one;" next, it is, "to commit an action that is ill, immoral, and unjuſt;" and in the next line, it is, "to do ill, or to act in prejudice of integrity, good-nature, and worth." Nay, ſo very ſimple a thing as a man's wounding himſelf, is, "to mangle or wound his outward form or conſtitution, natural body or limbs."

"Lord Shafteſbury," ſays Shenſtone, "in the genteel management of ſome familiar ideas, ſeems to have no equal. He diſcovers an eloignement from vulgar phraſes much be-

ſoming a perſon of quality,*" The "genteel management," however, of this, "perſon of quality," is ſuch as no plebian who poſſeſſes any delicacy of taſte will ever ſtudy to imitate.

CHAP. V.

OF SYNONYMOUS WORDS.

MANY words are accounted ſynonymous, which are not ſo in reality: and indeed it may reaſonably be diſputed whether two words can be found in any language, which expreſs preciſely the ſame idea. However cloſely they may approximate to each other in ſignification, ſtill can the diſcriminating eye of the critic diſcover a line of ſeparation between them. They agree in expreſſing one principal idea; but always expreſs it with ſome diverſity in the circumſtances. They are varied by ſome acceſſary idea which ſeverally accompanies each of the words, and which forms the diſtinction between them.

As they are like different ſhades of the ſame colour, an accurate writer can employ them to great advantage, by uſing them, ſo as to heighten and to finiſh the picture which he gives us. He ſupplies by the one what was wanting in the other, to the force, or to the luſtre of the image which he means to exhibit. But, with a view to this end, he muſt be extremely attentive to the choice which he makes of them. For the generality of writers are apt to confound them with each other; and to employ them with promiſcuous careleſſneſs, merely for the ſake of filling up a period, or of diverſifying the language. By uſing them as if their ſignification were preciſely the ſame, they unwarily involve their ideas in a kind of miſt.

Many inſtances might be given of a difference in meaning between words reputed ſynonymous. The few which I ſhall ſelect from Dr. Blair, and Mrs. Piozzi, may themſelves be of ſome uſe; and they will beſides ſerve to ſhow

* Shenſtone's Eſſays.

the neceſſity of attending, with the utmoſt care, to the exact ſignifications of words, if ever we would write with propriety or preciſion*.

To abandon, forsake, relinquish, give up, desert, quit, leave.—A man forſakes his miſtreſs, abandons all hope of regaining her loſt eſteem, relinquiſhes his pretentions in favour of another; gives up a place of truſt which he held under government, deſerts his party, leaves his parents in affliction, and quits the kingdom forever.

To abhor, detest.—To abhor, imports ſimply, ſtrong diſlike; to deteſt, imports alſo ſtrong diſapprobation. A man abhors being in debt; he deteſts treachery.

Active, assiduous, sedulous, diligent, industrious.—Natives of every nation agree, that the king is happy who is ſerved by an active miniſter, ever induſtrious to promote his country's welfare, nor leſs diligent to obtain intelligence of what is paſſing at other courts, than aſſiduous to relieve the cares of his royal maſter, and ſedulous to ſtudy the ſureſt methods of extending the commerce of the empire abroad, while he leſſens all burdens upon the ſubjects at home.

To avow, acknowledge, confess.—Each of theſe words ſignifies the affirmation of a fact, but in very different circumſtances. To avow, ſuppoſes the perſon to glory in it; to acknowledge, ſuppoſes a ſmall degree or delinquency, which the acknowlegment compenſates; to confeſs, ſuppoſes a higher degree of criminality. A patriot avows his oppoſition to a corrupt miniſtry, and is applauded; a gentleman acknowledges his miſtake, and is forgiven; a priſoner confeſſes the crime of which he ſtands accuſed, and is puniſhed.

Austerity, severity, rigour.—Auſterity relates to the manner of living; ſeverity of thinking; rigour of puniſhing. To auſterity is oppoſed effeminacy; to ſeverity relaxation; to rigour clemency. A hermit is auſtere in his life; a caſuiſt ſevere in his application of religion or law; a judge rigourous in his ſentences.

Capacity, ability.—Capacity relates to the mind's ſuſceptibility of receiving impreſſions; ability to its power of ma-

* Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres; Piozzi's British Synonymy.

king active exertions.—Clarendon, being a man of extenſive capacity, ſtored his mind with a variety of ideas; which circumſtance contributed to the ſucceſsful exertion of his vigorous abilities.

Cuſtom, habit.—Cuſtom reſpects the action; habit the actor. By cuſtom, we mean the frequent repetition of the ſame act; by habit, the effect which that repetition produces on the mind or body. By the cuſtom of walking often in the ſtreets, one acquires a habit of idleneſs.

A difficulty, an obſtacle.—A difficulty embarraſſes; an obſtacle ſtops us. The firſt generally expreſſes ſomething ariſing from the nature and circumſtances of the affair; the ſecond ſomething ariſing from a foreign cauſe. Philip found difficulty in managing the Athenians, on account of their natural diſpoſitions: but the eloquence of Demoſthenes was the great obſtacle to his deſigns.

To diſtinguiſh, ſeparate.—We diſtinguiſh what we do not wiſh to confound with another thing; we ſeparate what we wiſh to remove from it. Objects are diſtinguiſhed from each other by their qualities. They are ſeparated by the diſtance of time or place.

Entire, complete.—A thing is entire by wanting none of its parts; complete by wanting none of its appendages. A man may be maſter of an entire houſe; which has not one complete apartment.

Equivocal, ambiguous.—An equivocal expreſſion has one ſenſe open, and deſigned to be underſtood; another ſenſe concealed, and underſtood only by the perſon who uſes it. An ambiguous expreſſion has apparently two ſenſes, and leaves us at a loſs which of them to apply to it. An equivocal expreſſion is uſed with an attention to deceive; an ambiguous one, when purpoſely adopted, with an intention to give full information. An honeſt man will never employ an equivocal expreſſion; a confuſed man may often utter ambiguous terms without any deſign.

Haughtineſs, diſdain.—Haughtineſs is founded on the high opinion we entertain of ourſelves; diſdain on the mean opinion we entertain of others.

To invent, to diſcover.—To invent, ſignifies to produce ſomething totally new: to diſcover, ſignifies to find out

ſomething which was before hidden. Galileo invented the teleſcope; Harvey diſcovered the circulation of the blood.

Only, alone.—Only imports that there is no other object of the ſame kind: alone imports being unaccompanied by any other object. An only child is one that has neither brother nor ſiſter; a child alone, is one that is left by itſelf. There is a difference, therefore, in preciſe language between theſe two phraſes. "Virtue only makes us happy;" and "Virtue alone makes us happy." Virtue only makes us happy, implies, that nothing elſe can do it. Virtue alone makes us happy, implies that virtue, unaccompanied with other advantages, makes us happy.

Pride, vanity.—Pride makes us eſteem ourſelves; vanity makes us deſire the eſteem of others. A man may be too proud to be vain.

To remark, obſerve.—We remark, in the way of attention, in order to remember; we obſerve, in the way of examination, in order to judge. A traveller remarks the moſt ſtriking objects he ſees; a general obſerves all the motions of his enemy.

Surprised, aſtoniſhed, amazed, confounded.—I am ſurpriſed at what is new or unexpected; I am aſtoniſhed at what is vaſt or great; I am amazed at what is incomprehenſible; I am confounded by what is ſhocking or terrible.

Tranquillity, peace, calm.—Tranquillity reſpects a ſituation free from trouble, conſidered in itſelf; peace, the ſame ſituation with reſpect to any cauſes that might interrupt it; calm, with reſpect o a diſturbed ſituation going before, or ſucceeding it. A good man enjoys tranquillity in himſelf; peace with others; and calm after the ſtorm.

Wiſdom, prudence.—Wiſdom leads us to ſpeak and act with propriety. Prudence prevents us ſpeaking or acting improperly. A wiſe man employs the moſt proper means for ſucceſs; a prudent man the ſafeſt means to avoid being brought into danger.

With, by.—Both theſe particles expreſs the connection between ſome inſtrument, or means of effecting an end, and the agent who employs that inſtrument, or thoſe means: *with* expreſſes a more cloſe and immediate connection: *by* a more remote one. The proper diſtinction in the uſe of

theſe particles is elegantly marked in a paſſage of Robertſon's Hiſtory of Scotland. When one of the old Scottiſh kings was making an enquiry into the tenure *by* which his nobles held their lands, they ſtarted up, and drew their ſwords: "*By* theſe," ſaid they, "we acquired our lands, and *with* theſe we will defend them." The following inſtances will further exemplify the diſtinction. "He was killed *by* a ſtone which fell from the ſteeple."—"He was killed *with* a ſtone *by* Peter."

CHAP. VI.

OF THE STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

OF a ſentence or period, various definitions have been given. According to Ariſtotle, it is "A quantity of ſound which bears a certain ſignification according to its combination, and of which ſome detached part is alſo ſignificant."* Againſt this definition ſome objections might perhaps be urged: it is, however, ſufficient for our preſent purpoſe.

A ſentence always implies ſome one complete propoſition, or enunciation of thought; but every ſentence does not confine itſelf to a ſingle propoſition.

A ſentence conſiſts of component parts, which are called its members; and as theſe members may be either few or many, and may be connected in ſeveral different ways, the ſame thought, or mental propoſition, may often be either compreſſed into one ſentence, or diſtributed into two or three, without the material breach of any rule:

Upon ſurveying the annals of paſt ages, it ſeems that the greateſt geniuſes have been ſubject to this hiſtorical darkneſs; as is evident in thoſe great lights of antiquity, Homer and Euclid, whoſe writings indeed enrich mankind with perpetual ſtores of knowledge and delight; but whoſe lives are for the moſt part concealed in impenetrable oblivion.

Taylor's Life of Orpheus.

* Λογος δε ἐστιν φωνη σημαντικη κατα συνθηκην, ης των μερων τι σημαντικον ἐστι κεχωρισμενον.

Ariſtot. de Interpretatione, cap. ii.

The ſame meaning may thus be expreſſed in three ſentences: "Upon ſurveying the annals of paſt ages, it ſeems that the greateſt geniuſes have been ſubject to this hiſtorical darkneſs. This is evidently the caſe with regard to thoſe great lights of antiquity, Homer and Euclid. The writings of theſe illuſtrious authors enrich mankind with perpetual ſtores of knowledge and delight; but their lives are for the moſt part concealed in impenetrable oblivion."

With regard to the preciſe length of ſentences, no poſitive rule can be laid down; in this the writer muſt always be regulated by his own taſte. A ſhort period is lively and familiar: a long period, requiring more attention, makes an impreſſion grave and ſolemn. There may be an extreme on either ſide.* By means of too many ſhort ſentences,

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* A ſeries of ſhort periods has a very diſagreeable effect in poetry. The following quotations will juſtify this aſſertion:

So ſaying, they approach'd:
The gate. The centinel, ſoon as he heard
Thitherward footſteps, with uplifted lance
Challenged the darkling travellers. At their voice
He draws the ſtrong bolts back, and painful turns
The maſſy entrance. To the careful chiefs
They paſs. At midnight of their extreme ſtate
Conſelling they ſat, ſerious and ſtern. To them
Conrade. Aſſembled warriors! &c.

Southey.

Nor in the field of war
The Greeks excel by diſcipline alone,
But from their manners. Grant thy ear, O king,
The diff'rence learn of Grecian bands, and thine.
The flow'r, the bulwark of thy pow'rful hoſt
Are mercenaries. Theſe are canton'd round
Thy provinces. No fertile field demands
Their painful hand to turn the fallow glebe.
Them to the noon-day toil no harveſt calls.
The ſtubborn oak along the mountain's brow
Sinks not beneath their ſtroke. With careful eyes
They mark not how the flocks, or heifers feed.

Glover.

the ſenſe is divided and broken, the connexion of thought weakened, and the memory burdened, by being preſented with a long ſucceſſion of minute objects. And on the other hand, by the too frequent uſe of long periods, an author overloads the reader's ear, and fatigues his attention. In general, a writer ought to ſtudy a due mixture of long and ſhort periods, which prevents an irkſome uniformity, and entertains the mind with a variety of impreſſions.

Long ſentences cannot be properly introduced till the reader's attention is thoroughly engaged. They ought never to be placed at the beginning of diſcourſes of any deſcription. The following exordiums are exceptionable on this account:

It has been obſerved in all ages, that the advantages of nature or of fortune have contributed very little to the promotion of happineſs; and that thoſe whom the ſplendour of their rank, or the extent of their capacity, have placed upon the ſummit of human life, have not often given any juſt occaſion to envy in thoſe who look up to them from a lower ſtation; whether it be that apparent ſuperiority incites great deſigns, and great deſigns are naturally liable to fatal miſcarriages; or that the general lot of mankind is miſery, and the misfortunes of thoſe, whoſe eminence drew upon them an univerſal attention, have been more carefully recorded, becauſe they were more generally obſerved, and have in reality been only more conſpicuous than thoſe of others, not more frequent, or more ſevere.

Johnson's life of Savage.

When I conſider with a melancholy eye, the manifold needs and infirmities of human kind; when I reflect on the execution that is done in theſe northern climates, by the ſpleen, ſcurvy, cholick, the a-la-mode evil, and that numerous train of diſtempers, that annoy us Britiſh iſlanders; I can't but concur with you in thinking, there ought to be a ſuitable remedy provided againſt them, and that none is ſo ſovereign or univerſal, as the honeſt endeavours of plotting heads to reform what is amiſs in church and ſtate, and to put their project on certain quantities of paper, in order to their being diſtributed among his majeſty's liege people, and compaſs the deſign by a regular application to the eyes of his diſtempered ſubjects, or (which is as common and proper, at the ſame time) *in usum posteriorum.*

Arbuthnot's Supplement to Swift.

The French critics make a proper distribution of style into the two general classes of *periodique* and *coupe*. In the *style periodique*, the sentences are composed of several members linked together, and depending upon each other, so that the sense is not completely unfolded till the close :

When I see and reckon the various forms of connubial infelicity, the unexpected causes of lasting discord, the diversities of temper, the oppositions of opinion, the rude collisions of contrary desire, where both are urged by violent impulses, the obstinate contests of disagreeable virtue, where both are supported by consciousness of good intention, I am sometimes disposed to think with the severer casuists of most nations, that marriage is rather permitted than approved, and that none, but by the instigation of a passion too much indulged, entangle themselves with indissoluble compact.

Johnson's Rasselas.

When we attend to the infinite divisibility of matter, when we pursue animal life into these excessive small, and yet organized beings, that escape the nicest inquisition of the sense, when we push our discoveries yet downward, and consider those creatures so many degrees yet smaller, and the still-diminishing scale of existence, in tracing which the imagination is lost as well as the sense, we become amazed and confounded at the wonders of minuteness, nor can we distinguish in its effect this extreme of littleness from the vast itself. *Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.*

This is the most pompous, musical, and oratorical mode of composition.

In the *style coupe*, the sense is expressed in short independent propositions, each complete within itself :

Man he surveyed with the most accurate observation. His understanding, acute and vigorous, was well fitted for diving into the human mind. His humour, lively and versatile, could paint justly and agreeably what he saw. He possessed a rapid and clear conception, with an animated and graceful style. *Anderson's Life of Smollett.*

The women, in their turn, learned to be more vain, more gay, and more alluring. They grew studious to please and to conquer. They lost somewhat of the intrepidity and fierceness which before were characteristic of them. They

were to affect a delicacy and even a weakneſs. Their education was to be an object of greater attention and care. A finer ſenſe of beauty was to ariſe. They were to abandon all employments which hurt the ſhape and deform the body. They were to exert a fancy in dreſs and ornament. They were to be more ſecluded from obſervation. A greater play was to be given to ſentiment and anticipation. Greater reſerve was to accompany the commerce of the ſexes. Modeſty was to take the alarm ſooner. Gallantry, in all its faſhions, and in all its charms, was to unfold itſelf.

Stewart's View of Society.

This mode of writing always ſuits gay and eaſy ſubjects. It is more lively and ſtriking than the *ſtyle periodique*. According to the nature of the compoſition, and the general character it ought to bear, the one or the other of theſe may be predominant. But in every ſpecies of compoſition, they ought to be blended with each other. By a proper mixture of ſhort and long periods, the ear is gratified, and a certain ſprightlineſs is joined with majeſty: but when a ſort of regular compaſs of phraſes is employed, the reader ſoon becomes fatigued with the monotony. A train of ſentences, conſtructed in the ſame manner, and with the ſame number of members, whether long or ſhort, ſhould never be allowed to follow each other in cloſe uninterrupted ſucceſſion. Nothing is ſo tireſome as perpetual uniformity.

In the conſtruction and diſtribution of his ſentences, Shafteſbury has ſhown great art. It has already been hinted that he is often guilty of ſacrificing preciſion of ſtyle, to pomp of expreſſion; and that his whole manner is ſtrongly marked with a ſtiffneſs and affectation which render him very unfit to be conſidered as a general model. But, as his ear was fine, and as he was extremely attentive to every ſpecies of elegance, he was more ſtudious and ſucceſsful than any other Engliſh author in producing a proper intermixture of long and ſhort ſentences, with variety and harmony in their ſtructure.

Having offered theſe obſervations with regard to ſentences in general, I ſhall now enter upon a particular conſideration of the moſt eſſential properties of a perfect ſentence. Theſe ſeem to be clearneſs and preciſion, unity, ſtrength, and harmony.

CHAP. VII.

OF CLEARNESS AND PRECISION IN THE STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

IN the arrangement of a period, as well as in the choice of words, the chief object that ought to be kept in view is perſpicuity. This ſhould never be ſacrificed to any other beauty. The leaſt degree of ambiguity ought to be avoided with the greateſt care: it is a fault almoſt ſufficient to counterbalance every beauty which an author may happen to poſſeſs. Ambiguity ariſes from two cauſes; from an improper choice of words, or an improper collocation of them.* The firſt of theſe cauſes has already been fully conſidered.

In the collocation of words, the firſt thing to be ſtudied is a rigid conformity to the rules of grammar, as far as theſe can guide us. But as the ſyſtem of Engliſh grammar is not altogether complete, an ambiguous arrangement of words may frequently be obſerved where we cannot diſcover a tranſgreſſion of any grammatical rule. The relation which the words or members of a period bear to each other, cannot be pointed out in Engliſh, as in the Greek and Latin, by means of their terminations: it muſt be aſcertained by the poſition in which they ſtand. Hence an important rule in the ſtructure of a ſentence is, that the words or members moſt intimately connected, ſhould be placed as near to each other as is conſiſtent with elegance and harmony, ſo that their mutual relation may be plainly perceived.

I. Ambiguities are frequently occaſioned by the improper uſe of the adverb. This part of ſpeech, as its name implies is generally placed cloſe or near to the word which it modifies or affects; and its propriety and force depend on its poſition. By neglecting to advert to this circumſtance, writers frequently convey a different meaning from what they intended.

* The reader will find this ſubject treated by Condillac, *Traite de l'Art d'Ecrire, liv. I. chap. xi.*

Sixtus the Fourth was, if I miſtake not, a great collector of books *at leaſt*. *Bolingbroke on the Study of History.*

At leaſt, ſhould not be connected with *books*, but with *collector*.

The Romans underſtood liberty, *at leaſt* as well as we. *Swift on the Adv. of Religion.*

Theſe words are ſuſceptible of two different interpretations, according as the emphaſis, in reading them, is laid upon *liberty*, or upon *at leaſt*. In the former caſe they will ſignify, that whatever other things we may underſtand better than the Romans, *liberty*, at leaſt was one thing which they underſtood as well as we. In the latter they will import, that liberty was underſtood, *at leaſt*, as well by them as by us. If this laſt was the author's meaning, the ambiguity would have been avoided, and the ſenſe rendered independent of the manner of pronouncing, by arranging the words thus: "The Romans underſtood liberty, as well, at leaſt, as we."

By greatneſs, I do not *only* mean the bulk of any ſingle object, but the largeneſs of a whole view. *Addison, Spectator.*

Here the poſition of the adverb *only*, renders it a limitation of the word *mean*; as if the author intended to ſay, that he did ſomething beſides meaning. The ambiguity may be removed by the following arrangement: "By greatneſs, I do not mean the bulk of any ſingle object only, but the largeneſs of a whole view."

In common converſation, the tone and emphaſis which we uſe in pronouncing ſuch words as *only*, *wholly*, *at leaſt*, generally ſerves to ſhew their reference, and to render the meaning clear and obvious: and hence we acquire a habit of throwing them in looſely in the courſe of a period. But, in written diſcourſes, which addreſs the eye, and not the ear, greater accuracy is requiſite. Theſe adverbs ſhould be ſo connected with the words they are meant to qualify, as to prevent all appearance of ambiguity.

II. Words expreſſing things connected in the thought, ſhould be placed as near together as poſſible. This rule is derived immediately from the principles of human nature;

in which we may diſcover a remarkable propenſity to place together objects that are in any manner connected. When objects are arranged according to their connections, we have a ſenſe of order: when they are placed fortuitouſly, we have a ſenſe of diſorder.

The connective parts of ſentences are the moſt important of all, and require the greateſt care and attention; for it is by theſe chiefly that the train of thought, the courſe of reaſoning, and the whole progreſs of the mind, in continued diſcourſe of all kinds, is laid open, and on the right uſe of theſe depends perſpicuity, the greateſt beauty of ſtyle.

The bad effect of a violent ſeparation of words or members, which are intimately connected, will appear from the following examples:

The Engliſh are naturally fanciful, and very often diſpoſed, by that gloomineſs and melancholy of temper which is ſo frequent in our nation, to many wild notions and viſions, to which others are not ſo liable.

Addiſon, Spectator.

Here the verb *diſposed* is, by a long clauſe, violently ſeparated from the ſubject to which it refers. This harſh conſtruction is the leſs excuſeable, as the fault is eaſily prevented by the following arrangement: "The Engliſh are naturally fanciful, and by that gloomineſs and melancholy of temper which is ſo frequent in our nation, are often diſpoſed to many wild notions, to which others are not ſo liable."

The ſubſequent examples are of the ſame deſcription:

No mortal author, in the ordinary fate and viciſſitude of things, knows to what uſe his works may, ſome time or other, be applied. *Spectator.*

It cannot be impertinent or ridiculous, therefore, in ſuch a country, whatever it might be in the Abbot of St. Real's, which was Savoy, I think; or in Peru, under the Incas, where Garcilaſſo de la Vega ſays it was lawful for none but the nobility to ſtudy; for men of all degrees to inſtruct themſelves in thoſe affairs wherein they may be actors, or judges of thoſe that act, or controllers of thoſe that judge.

Bolingbroke on the Study of History.

If Scipio, who was naturally given to women, for which anecdote we have, if I miſtake not, the authority of, Poly-

bius, as well as ſome verſes of Nævius, preſerved by Aulus Gellius, had been educated by Olympias at the court of Philip, it is improbable that he would have reſtored the beautiful Spaniard. *Ibid.*

May we not conjecture, for it is but conjecture, ſomething more? *Bolingbroke's Dissert. on Parties.*

The works of Bolingbroke abound with improper arrangements of this kind.

The foregoing rule is very frequently tranſgreſſed in the diſpoſition of pronouns. The relative *who* or *which*, when introduced in order to avoid the repetition of the name of ſome perſon or thing, ought always to be placed as near as poſſible to the name of that perſon or thing. Where it is out of its proper place, we conſtantly find ſomething awkward or disjointed to the ſtructure of the ſentence.

This kind of wit was very much in vogue among our countrymen, about an age or two ago *who* did not practiſe it for any oblique reaſon, but purely for the ſake of being witty. *Addison, Spectator.*

In this ſentence the meaning is ſufficiently obvious; but the conſtruction would be evidently improved by diſpoſing of the circumſtance, "about an age or two ago," in ſuch a manner as not to ſeparate the relative *who* from its antecedent *countrymen*. "About an age or two ago this kind of wit was very much in vogue among our countrymen, who did not practiſe it for any oblique reaſon, but purely for the ſake of being witty."

It is folly to pretend to arm ourſelves againſt the accidents of life, by heaping up treaſures, *which* nothing can protect us againſt, but the good providence of our heavenly Father. *Sherlock's Sermons.*

This conſtruction implies, that it is *treasures*, and not the *accidents of life*, from which no mortal can protect himſelf by his own exertions. The ſentence ought to have ſtood thus: "It is folly to pretend, by heaping up treaſures, to arm ourſelves againſt the accidents of life, againſt which nothing can protect us, but the good providence of our heavenly Father."

Thus I have fairly given you, Sir, my own opinion, as well as that of a great majority of both houſes here, relating to this weighty affair; upon *which* I am confident you may ſecurely reckon. *Swift on the Sacramental Teſt.*

Here the author ſeems to adviſe his correſpondent to reckon upon this weighty affair; though he certainly meant that it was the great majority upon which he might reckon. The obſcurity will be removed by arranging the ſentence thus: "Thus, Sir, I have given you my own opinion relating to this weighty affair, as well as that of a great majority of both houſes here; upon which I am confident you may ſecurely reckon."

I allude to the article BLIND in the Encyclopædia Britannica, publiſhed at Edinburgh in the year 1783, which was written by him. *Mackenzie's Life of Blacklock.*

This arrangement leaves us to ſuppoſe that Blacklock was the ſole author of a book to which he only contributed an eſſay on blindneſs. His biographer's meaning might have been expreſſed thus: "I allude to the article BLIND, which was written by him, and publiſhed at Edinburgh in the year 1783, in the Encyclopædia Britannica."

We no where meet with a more glorious and pleaſing ſhow in nature, than what appears in the heavens at the riſing and ſetting of the ſun, *which* is wholly made up of thoſe different ſtains of light, and ſhew themſelves in clouds of a different ſituation. *Addiſon, Spectator.*

Which is here deſigned to connect with the word *ſhew*, as its antecedent; but it is removed to ſuch a diſtance, that, without a careful attention to the ſenſe, we would be led, by the rules of ſyntax, to refer it to the riſing and ſetting of the ſun, or to the ſun itſelf. Hence an indiſtinctneſs is thrown over the whole ſentence.

From a habit of ſaving time and paper, *which* they acquired at the univerſity, they write in ſo diminutive a manner, with ſuch frequent blots and interlineations, that they are hardly able to go on without perpetual heſitations, or extemporary expletives.

Swift's Letter to a Young Gentleman.

The author certainly does not mean, that the clergymen of whom he ſpeaks, had acquired time and paper at the univerſity, but that they had there acquired a habit of ſaving time and paper. The ſentence ought to have run thus: "From a habit which they have acquired at the univerſity of ſaving time and paper, they write in ſo diminutive a manner, with ſuch frequent blots, &c."

III. Another great ſource of ambiguity is the too frequent repetition of pronouns, when we have occaſion to refer to different perſons. The ſubſequent examples will ſerve to illuſtrate this obſervation:

They were ſummoned occaſionally by *their* kings, when compelled by *their* wants and by *their* fears to have recourſe to *their* aid. *Robertſon's View of Society.*

Men look with an evil eye upon the good that is in others; and think, that *their* reputation obſcures *them*; and that *their* commendable qualities do ſtand in *their* light: and therefore *they* do what *they* can to caſt a cloud over *them*, that the bright ſhining of *their* virtues may not obſcure *them*. *Tillotſon's Sermons.*

The Earl of Falmouth and Mr. Coventry were rivals, *who* ſhould have moſt influence with the Duke, *who* loved the Earl beſt, but thought the other the wiſer man, *who* ſupported Pen, *who* diſobliged all the courtiers, even againſt the Earl, *who* contemned Pen as a fellow of no ſenſe.
Clarendon's Continuation.

All which, with the King's and Queen's ſo ample promiſes to *him* (the treaſurer) ſo few hours before the conferring the place on another, and the duke of York's manner of receiving *him* (the treaſurer) after *he* (the chancellor) had been ſhut up with *him* (the duke) as *he* (the treaſurer) was informed, might very well excuſe *him* (the treaſurer) from thinking *he* (the chancellor) had ſome ſhare in the affront *he* (the treaſurer) had undergone. *Ibid.*

Of theſe ſentences, the firſt three are not involved in much obſcurity, though they are certainly rendered diſagreeable and inelegant; but the laſt cannot poſſibly be underſtood, without a careful recollection of the contents of ſeveral pages preceding.

IV. A circumſtance ought never to be placed between two capital members of a period; for by ſuch an arrangement, we are left doubtful to which of the two the circumſtance refers. But when it is interjected between parts of the member to which it properly belongs, the ambiguity is removed, and theſe members are kept diſtinct from each other.

Let the virtue of a definition be what it will, *in the order of things*, it ſeems rather to follow than to precede our enquiry, of which it ought to be conſidered as the reſult.

Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.

This arrangement leaves us dubious, whether the clauſe, "in the order of things," refers to what goes before or to what follows. The ambiguity may be thus removed: "Let the virtue of a definition be what it will, it ſeems, in the order of things, rather to follow than to precede our enquiry, of which it ought to be conſidered as the reſult."

The knight, ſeeing his habitation reduced to ſo ſmall a compaſs, and himſelf in a manner ſhut out of his own houſe, *upon the death of his mother*, ordered all the apartments to be flung open, and exorciſed by his chaplain.

Addiſon, Spectator.

This may either imply, that upon the death of his mother, the knight was ſhut out of his own houſe, or that upon the death of his mother, he ordered all his apartments to be exorciſed. As the latter was the author's meaning, the ſentence ought to have ſtood thus: "Seeing his habitation reduced to ſo ſmall a compaſs, and himſelf in a manner ſhut out of his own houſe, the knight, upon the death of his mother, ordered all the apartments to be flung open, and exorciſed by his chaplain.

Though our brother is upon the rack, *as long as we ourſelves are at eaſe*, our ſenſes will never inform us of what he ſuffers.

Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments.

Better thus: "Though our brother is upon the rack, our ſenſes will never, as long as we ourſelves are at eaſe, inform us of what he ſuffers."

This work in its full extent, *being now afflicted with an aſthma, and finding the power of life gradually declining*, he had no longer courage to undertake.

Johnſon's Life of Savage.

This conſtruction would lead us to conclude, that it was the work, and not the poet, that was afflicted with an aſthma. The following arrangement removes the ambiguity: "Being now afflicted with an aſthma, and finding the powers of life gradually declining, he had no longer courage to undertake this work in its full extent."

Since it is neceſſary that there ſhould be a perpetual intercourſe of buying and ſelling, and dealing upon credit, *where fraud is permitted or connived at, or hath no law to punish it*, the honeſt dealer is always undone, and the knave gets the advantage. *Swift's Travels of Gulliver.*

This arrangement conveys the idea that people "deal upon credit" in theſe places only "where fraud is permitted." The ambiguity might have been avoided by the inſertion of a few additional ſyllables. "Since it is neceſſary that there ſhould be a perpetual intercourſe of buying and ſelling and dealing upon credit, *the conſequence is, that*, where fraud is permitted or connived at, or hath no law to puniſh it, the honeſt dealer is always undone, and the knave gets the advantage."

The miniſter who grows leſs by his elevation, *like a little ſtatue placed on a mighty pedeſtal*, will always have his jealouſy ſtrong about him.

Bolingbroke's Diſſertation on Parties.

This conſtruction leaves it doubtful whether the object introduced by way of ſimile, relate to the ſubſequent or to the preceding clauſe. Better thus: "The miniſter who, like a little ſtatue placed on a mighty pedeſtal, grows leſs by his elevation, will always have his jealouſy ſtrong about him."

Inſtead of being able to employ troops trained to ſkill in arms, and to military ſubordination, *by regular diſcipline*, monarchs were obliged to depend on ſuch forces as their vaſſals conducted to their ſtandard in conſequence of their military tenures. *Robertſon's View of Society.*

Here the author's meaning is ſufficiently obvious; yet from the conſtruction, we might conclude, that a little regular diſcipline had been adminiſtered to monarchs, in order to make them depend on ſuch forces as their vaſſals conducted to their

ſtandard. The ſentence may be thus arranged: "Inſtead of being able to employ troops trained, by regular diſcipline, to ſkill in arms, and to military ſubordination, monarchs were obliged to depend on ſuch forces as their vaſſals conducted to their ſtandard in conſequence of their military tenures."

Perhaps it may be thought, that ſome of the foregoing objections are too ſcrupulous, and that the defect of perſpicuity is eaſily ſupplied by accurate punctuation. It may be granted, that punctuation will ſometimes remove an ambiguity; but it can never produce that peculiar beauty which is perceived when the ſenſe is clearly and diſtinctly unfolded by means of happy arrangement. Such influence does this beauty poſſeſs, that by a natural tranſition of perception, it is communicated to the very ſound of the words, ſo as in appearance to improve the muſic of the period.

Having now conſidered the principal circumſtances which contribute to perſpicuity, and the various modes in which the laws relating to it may be tranſgreſſed, I ſhall conclude the ſubject by enquiring whether it be poſſible, that this eſſential quality of ſtyle may be carried to exceſs.

It has been alleged, that too much perſpicuity has a tendency to cloy the reader, and that it becomes irkſome by affording no opportunity of exertion to the rational powers of the mind. This objection ariſes from the error of confounding two diſſimilar objects, the common and the clear, and thence very naturally their contraries, the new and the obſcure. If you entertain your reader ſolely or chiefly with thoughts which are either trite or obvious, he will ſoon be filled with languor and diſguſt. You preſent no uncommon images or ſentiments to his mind, you give him little or no information, and conſequently afford neither exerciſe to his reaſon, nor entertainment to his fancy. In what we read, and what we hear, we always expect to find ſomething with which we were formerly unacquainted. And when this expectation is diſappointed, we diſcover nothing to repay our attention. We are ſoon diſguſted with ſuch a trifling minuteneſs of narration, deſcription, or argument, as an ordinary apprehenſion renders ſuperfluous. The reaſon is, not that any thing is ſaid with too much perſpicuity, but that many things are ſaid with which no perſon is unacquainted. Thus, when Quintus Curtius had informed us, that the ſhouts of the Macedonian army were reverberated by the cliffs of

the mountains, and the vaſt foreſts, it was certainly very unneceſſary to add, "quippe ſemper circumjecta nemora petræque, quantamcumque accipere vocem, multiplicato ſono referunt." Reaſons that are known to every one, ought to be taken for granted: to expreſs them is childiſh, and interrupts the narration.

The practice of collecting trite maxims and common-place ſentiments is finely ridiculed in an eſſay of Swift's. From this I ſhall ſelect one paſſage: "All rivers go to the ſea, but none return from it. Xerxes wept when he beheld his army; to conſider that in leſs than an hundred years they would be all dead. Anacreon was choqued with a grape-ſtone; and violent joy kills as well as violent grief. There is nothing conſtant in this world but inconſtancy; yet Plato thought that if virtue would appear in the world in her own native dreſs, all men would be enamoured with her. But now, ſince intereſt governs the world, and men neglect the golden mean, Jupiter himſelf, if he came on earth, would be deſpiſed, unleſs it were as he did to Danae, in a golden ſhower. For men, now-a-days, worſhip the riſing ſun, and not the ſetting."*

It is futility in the thought, and not perſpicuity in the language, which conſtitutes the fault of ſuch performances as thoſe to which I have here alluded. There is as little hazard, that a compoſition ſhall be faulty in the latter reſpect, as that a mirror ſhall be too faithful in reflecting the images of objects, or that the glaſſes of a teleſcope ſhall be too tranſparent. At the ſame time, it is not to be diſembled, that, with inattentive readers, darkneſs frequently paſſes for depth. On the contrary, to be perſpicuous, and to be ſuperficial, are regarded by them as ſynonymous. But it is not ſurely to their abſurd notions that our language ought to be adapted.

Before I diſmiſs this ſubject, it may, however, be proper to obſerve, that every ſpecies of compoſition does not admit of an equal degree of perſpicuity. In the ſublime ode, for example, it is impoſſible, or at leaſt very difficult, to reconcile the utmoſt perſpicuity with that force and vivacity which are indiſpenſably requiſite in ſuch performances. But even in this caſe, though the genius of the higher ſpe-

* Swift's Critical Eſſay upon the Faculties of the Mind.

cies of lyric poetry may render obſurity to a certain degree excuſeable, nothing can ever conſtitute it a poſitive excellence.

CHAP. VIII.

OF UNITY IN THE STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

IN compoſitions of every deſcription, a certain degree of unity is abſolutely requiſite. There muſt always be ſome leading principle to form a chain of connexion between the component parts. In ſingle ſentences, which are members of a compoſition, the ſame principle muſt alſo be predominant.

I. Objects that have no intimate connexion ſhould never be crowded into one ſentence. A ſentence or period ought to expreſs one entire thought or mental propoſition; and different thoughts ought to be ſeparated in the expreſſion, by being placed in different periods. It is improper to connect in language things which are ſeparated in reality. Of errors againſt this rule I ſhall produce a few examples.

In this uneaſy ſtate, both of his public and private life, Cicero was oppreſſed by a new and cruel affliction, the death of his beloved daughter Tullia; which happened ſoon after her divorce from Dolabella, whoſe manners and humours were entirely diſagreeable to her.

Middleton's Life of Cicero.

The principal object in this ſentence, is the death of Tullia, which was the cauſe of her father's affliction, The time when the event took place is, without any impropriety, pointed out in the courſe of the ſentence; but the ſubjunction of Dolabella's character is foreign to the main object. It breaks the unity and compactneſs of the period, by preſenting a new picture to the reader.

He is ſuppoſed to have fallen, by his father's death into the hands of his uncle, a vintner, near Charing-croſs, who ſent him for ſome time to Dr. Buſby, at Weſtminſter; but, not intending to give him any education beyond that of the

ſchool, took him, when he was well advanced in literature to his own houſe, where the earl of Dorſet, celebrated for patronage of genius, found him by chance, as Burnet relates, reading Horace, and was ſo well pleaſed with his proficiency, that he undertook the care and coſt of his academical education. *Johnſon's Life of Prior.*

This ſingle ſentence contains no inconſiderable number of the particulars that are known with regard to the perſonal hiſtory of Prior. He is conducted from the houſe of his father to that of his uncle; ſent to Weſtminſter ſchool, where he makes conſiderable progreſs in literature; is taken from ſchool, and remains at his uncle's; obtains the patronage of the earl of Dorſet, who, if Burnet may be credited, found him reading Horace; and, laſt of all, is about being ſent to the univerſity, under the protection of that nobleman.

The uſual acceptation takes profit and pleaſure for two different things, and not only calls the followers or votaries of them by ſeveral names of buſy and idle men, but diſtinguiſhes the faculties of the mind that are converſant about them, calling the operations of the firſt wiſdom, and of the other wit, which is a Saxon word, that is uſed to expreſs what the Spaniards and Italians call *ingenio*, and the French *eſprit*, both from the Latin; but I think wit more peculiarly ſignifies that of poetry, as may occur upon remarks on the Runic language. *Temple on Poetry.*

Before the author arrives at the cloſe of this ſentence, he ſeems to have forgotten what he ſet out with inculcating.

A right honourable author, having had occaſion to mention the influence of the ſun, expatiates in the following manner:

It breaks the icy fetters of the main, where vaſt ſea-monſters pierce through floating iſlands, with arms that can withſtand the cryſtal rock; whilſt others, who of themſelves ſeem great as iſlands, are by their bulk alone armed againſt all but man, whoſe ſuperiority over creatures of ſuch ſize and force, ſhould make him mindful of his privilege of reaſon, and force him humbly to adore the great Compoſer of theſe wondrous frames, and the author of his own ſuperior wiſdom. *Shaftesbury's Moraliſts.*

At the commencement of this ſentence, the ſun is introduced breaking the icy fetters of the main: the ſun is ſucceeded by ſea monſters piercing through floating iſlands *with their arms*; and after theſe have played their part, man is brought into view, to receive a long and ſerious admonition.

To this ſucceeded that licentiouſneſs which entered with the Reſtoration; and from infecting our religion and morals, fell to corrupt our language: which laſt was not like to be much improved by thoſe, who, at that time, made up the court of king Charles the Second; either ſuch who had followed him in his baniſhment, or who had been altogether converſant in the dialect of thoſe fanatic times; or young men, who had been educated in the ſame company; ſo that the court, which uſed to be the ſtandard of propriety and correctneſs of ſpeech, was then, and I think hath ever ſince continued, the worſt ſchool in England for that accompliſhment; and ſo will remain till better care be taken in the education of our young nobility; that they may ſet out in the world with ſome foundation of literature, in order to qualify them for patterns of politeneſs. *Swift on the English Tongue.*

How many different facts, reaſonings, and obſervations, are here preſented to the mind!

Authors who are fond of long periods, very frequently fall into errors of this kind. As a proof of this aſſertion we need only inſpect the hiſtorical works of Burnet and Clarendon. Even in later and more correct writers, we ſometimes find a period extended to ſuch a length, and comprehending ſo many particulars, as more juſtly to deſerve the appellation of a diſcourſe, than of a ſentence. But heterogeneous particulars may occaſionally be crowded into periods of no uncommon length. The following quotations will illuſtrate this obſervation:

Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleaſant: alſo our bed is green. *Song of Solomon.*

His own notions were always good; but he was a man of great expence. *Burnet's Hiſt. of his own Times.*

I ſingle him out among the moderns, becauſe he had the fooliſh preſumption to cenſure Tacitus, and to write hiſtory

himself; and your Lordship will forgive this short excursion in honour of a favorite author.

Bolingbroke on the Study of History.

In serious composition, words conveying ideas that are unconnected with each other, ought never to be forced into an artificial union:

Germania omnis a Gallis Rhætisque et Pannoniis, Rheno et Dunubio fluminibus, a Sarmatis Dacisque, mutuo metu aut montibus separatur. *Tacitus de Moribus Germanorum.*

But when an author wishes to place some object in a ludicrous point of view, a combination of this kind may have a good effect:

On l'a donc délivrée sur le champ, et de la soffe et de toutes ses appréhensions. *Hamilton, Quatre Facardins.*

After much patience, and many a wistful look, Pennant started up, seized the wig, and threw it into the fire. It was in flames in a moment, and so was the officer, who ran to his sword. *Walpoliana.*

He is surely much happier in this noble condescension, and must acquire a more perfect knowledge of mankind, than if he kept himself aloof from his subjects, continually wrapt up in his own importance and imperial fur.

Moore's View of Society in France, &c.

She even believed that the journey would prove a remedy for her asthmatic complaints; her desire of a matrimonial establishment was full as efficacious as the vinegar of Hannibal, and the Alps melted before it.

Hayley's Essay on Old Maids.

Mr. Dennel and Mrs. Albery, who neither of them, at any time, took the smallest notice of what she said, passed on, and left the whole weight both of her person and her complaints to Camilla. *D'Arblay's Camilla.*

II. Parentheses ought never to be introduced in the middle of sentences; and indeed the unity and the beauty of a period can never be complete where they are introduced in any situation. At present they are not so frequently used as they were formerly: and it is to be hoped, that the time will arrive when they shall be entirely excluded. They are, at best, nothing more than a perplexed and awkward method of dis-

posing of some thought which the writer wants art to introduce in its proper place.

It seems to me, that in order to maintain the moral system of the world at a certain point, far below that of ideal perfection, (for we are made capable of conceiving what we are incapable of attaining) but, however, sufficient upon the whole to constitute a state easy and happy, or at the worst tolerable; I say, it seems to me, that the Author of nature has thought fit to mingle from time to time, among the societies of men, a few, and but a few, of those on whom he is graciously pleased to bestow a larger proportion of the ethereal spirit than is given in the ordinary course of his providence to the sons of men. *Bolingbroke's Spirit of Patriotism.*

Into this sentence, by means of a parenthesis, and other interjected circumstances, the author has contrived to thrust so many particulars, that he is obliged to have recourse to the sorry phrase *I say*, the occurrence of which may always be regarded as an infallible mark of a clumsy and unskilful construction. Such a phrase may be excuseable in conversation; but in polished writings, it is altogether unpardonable.

The most astonishing instance of this respect, so frequently paid to Nothing, is when it is paid (if I may so express myself) to something less than Nothing; when the person who receives it is not only void of the qualities for which he is respected, but is in reality notoriously guilty of vices directly opposite to the virtues, whose applause he receives. This is, indeed, the highest degree of Nothing, or, (if I may be allowed the word) the Nothingest of all Nothings.

Fielding's Essay on Nothing.

Here the effect of the author's wit would be rendered more powerful, by the omission of these qualifying parentheses. Instead of pointing the sentiment, they have a quite opposite tendency. In compositions of this kind, no apology needed to have been offered for such expressions as Fielding has here employed.

The subsequent quotations will farther illustrate the disagreeable effect of parentheses:

The description Ovid gives of his situation, in that first period of his existence, seems (some poetical embellishments

excepted) ſuch as, were we to reaſon *a priori*, we ſhould conclude he was placed in. *Lancaster's Eſſay on Delicacy.*

When this parliament ſate down, (for it deſerves our particular obſervation that both houſes were full of zeal for the preſent government, and of reſentment againſt the late uſurpations) there was but one party in parliament; and no other party could raiſe its head in the nation.

Bolingbroke's Diſſertation on Parties.

It will, therefore, be very reaſonable to allow on their account as much as, added to the loſſes of the conqueror, may amount to a million of deaths, and then we ſhall ſee this conqueror, the oldeſt we have on the records of hiſtory (though, as we have obſerved before, the chronology of theſe remote times is extremely uncertain) opening the ſcene by a deſtruction of at leaſt one million of his ſpecies, unprovoked but by his ambition, without any motives but pride, cruelty, and madneſs, and without any benefit to himſelf (for Juſtin expreſsly tells us, he did not maintain his conqueſts), but ſolely to make ſo many people, or ſo diſtant countries, feel experimentally, how ſevere a ſcourge Providence intends for the human race, when he gives one man the power over many, and arms his naturally impotent and feeble rage, with the hands of millions, who know no common principle of action, but a blind obedience to the paſſions of their ruler.

Burke's Vindication of Natural Society.

III. Sentences ought never to be extended beyond what ſeems their natural cloſe. Every thing that is one, ſhould have a beginning, a middle, and an end. It need not here be obſerved, that, according to the laws of rhetoric, an unfiniſhed ſentence is no ſentence at all. But we frequently meet with ſentences which may be ſaid to be more than finiſhed. When we have arrived at what we expected was to be their concluſion, ſome circumſtance which ought to have been omitted, or to have been otherwiſe diſpoſed of, ſuddenly preſents itſelf. Such Appendages tend very much to deſtroy the beauty and to diminiſh the ſtrength of a period.

And here it was often found of abſolute neceſſity to enflame or cool the paſſions of the audience; eſpecially at Rome, where Tully ſpoke, and with whoſe writings young divines (I mean thoſe among them who read old authors) are more

converſant than with thoſe of Demoſthenes; who, by many degrees, excelled the other; at leaſt as an orator.

Swift's Letter to a Young Gentleman.

This is as weak a ſentence as could poſſibly be written. But without endeavouring to point out the whole of its deformity, I ſhall only advert to the circumſtance for which it is here introduced. The natural cloſe of the period is at the laſt ſemicolon: and when we have proceeded thus far, we expect no additional information. But the halting clauſe, "at leaſt as an orator," is unexpectedly intruded upon us.

Speaking of Burnet and Fontenelle;

The firſt could not end his learned treatiſe without a panegyric of modern learning and knowledge in compariſon of the ancient; and the other falls ſo groſsly into the cenſure of the old poetry, and preference of the new, that I could not read either of theſe ſtrains without indignation; which no quality among men is ſo apt to raiſe in me as ſelf-ſufficiency, the worſt compoſition out of the pride and ignorance of mankind.

Temple on Ancient and Modern Learning.

Of this ſentence the word *indignation* forms the natural concluſion; what follows, is altogether foreign to the propoſition with which the author ſet out.

All the world acknowledgeth the Æneid to be moſt perfect in its kind: and, conſidering the diſadvantage of the language, and the ſeverity of the Roman Muſe, the poem is ſtill more wonderful; ſince, without the liberty of the Grecian poets, the diction is ſo great and noble, ſo clear, ſo forcible and expreſſive, ſo chaſte and pure, that even all the ſtrength and compaſs of the Greek tongue, joined to Homer's fire, cannot give us ſtronger and clearer ideas, than the great Virgil hath ſet before our eyes; ſome few inſtances excepted, in which Homer through the force of genius hath excelled.

Felton's Diſſertation on the Claſſics.

The circumſtance ſo ungracefully appended to this ſentence might be diſpoſed of in the following manner: "All the world acknowledgeth, &c. that, with the exception of ſome few inſtances in which Homer through the forces of genius hath excelled, even all the ſtrength and compaſs of the Greek

tongue, joined to Homer's fire, cannot give us ſtronger and clearer ideas, than the great Virgil hath ſet before our eyes."

By way of appendix to this chapter, we may obſerve, that it is improper to begin a ſentence in ſuch a looſe manner as appears in the following examples:

As nothing damps or depreſſes the ſpirits like great ſubjection or ſlavery, either of body or mind; ſo nothing nouriſhes, revives, and fortifies them like great liberty. *Which* may poſſibly enter among other reaſons, of what has been obſerved about long life being found more in England, than in others of our neighbouring countries.

Temple on Health and Long Life.

For this end I propoſe to-morrow to ſet out a week's talk to my labourers, and accept your invitation, if Dion thinks good. *To which* I gave conſent.

Berkeley's Minute Philoſopher.

I think it convenient to endeavour, if poſſible, to remove a violent, and, I think, unreaſonable prejudice which men have received againſt all thoſe who endeavour to make religion reaſonable. *As if* Bellarmine had been in the right, when he ſaid that faith was rather to be defined by ignorance than by knowledge.

Tillotſon's Sermons.

CHAP. IX.

OF STRENGTH IN THE STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

THE ſtrength of a ſentence conſiſts in ſuch a diſpoſition of its ſeveral words and members, as ſhall tend moſt powerfully to impreſs the mind of the reader with the meaning which the author wiſhes to convey. To the production of this effect the qualities of perſpicuity and unity are abſolutely requiſite; but they are not of themſelves ſufficient. For a ſentence may be poſſeſſed of perſpicuity and unity, and yet, by ſome unfavourable circumſtance in its ſtructure, may be deſtitute of that ſtrength or livelineſs of expreſſion which a more happy arrangement would have produced.

I. A ſentence ought to be diveſted of all redundant words. Theſe may ſometimes be conſiſtent with perſpicuity and unity; but they are always irreconcileable with ſtrength. It is an invariable maxim, that words which add nothing to the ſenſe or to the clearneſs, muſt diminiſh the force of the expreſſion.

I look upon it as *my duty*, ſo far as God has enabled me, and as long as I keep within the bounds of truth, *of duty* and of decency. *Swift's Letters.*

It would certainly be very ſtrange that any man ſhould think it his duty to tranſgreſs the bounds of duty.

How many are there by whom theſe *tidings* of good *news* were never heard? *Bolingbroke, Ph. Fr.*

This is tidings of tidings, or news of news.

Never did Atticus ſucceed better in gaining the *univerſal* love and eſteem of *all* men. *Spectator.*

Either of the two words in Italics might have been uſed; but the admiſſion of both is chargeable with tautology.

In the Attic commonwealth it was the *privilege* and *birthright* of every *citizen* and *poet*, to rail *aloud* and *in public*. *Swift's Tale of a Tub.*

This ſentence would have loſt nothing of its ſignification, if the author had ſaid, "In the Attic commonwealth it was the privilege of every citizen to rail in public."

I went home, full of *a great many* ſerious reflections. *Guardian.*

It was ſufficient to inform us, that he went home *full* of ſerious reflections.

We may here obſerve, that a principal cauſe of languid verboſity is the injudicious uſe of adverbs and epithets. When uſed ſparingly and with judgment, they have a powerful influence in enlivening the expreſſion; but nothing has more of an oppoſite effect than a profuſion of them. When ſcattered with a too liberal hand, they lengthen the ſentence, without adding proportionate vigour: they betray a violent effort to ſay ſomething great or uncommon.

Adjectives, however, are not always to be regarded as mere epithets. Whatever is neceſſary for aſcertaining the

import of either a noun or a verb, whether by adding to the ſenſe, or by limiting it, is ſomething more than an epithet, according to the common acceptation of that term. Thus when I ſay "the glorious ſun," the word *glorious* is an epithet; it expreſſes a quality which, being conceived always to belong to the object, is, like all its other qualities comprehended in the name. But when I ſay "the meridian ſun;" the word *meridian* is not barely an epithet; it makes a real addition to the ſignification, by denoting the ſun to be in the ſtation which he always occupies at noon.—A ſimilar diſtinction is to be made between adverbs that are abſolutely neceſſary for the expreſſion of an idea, and thoſe which are introduced for the ſole purpoſe of embelliſhment.

II. A ſentence ought alſo to be diveſted of all redundant members. Every member ſhould preſent a new thought. Yet we ſometimes meet with periods in which the laſt member is nothing more than the echo of the firſt, or a repetition of it in a different form.

The very firſt diſcovery of it ſtrikes the mind with inward joy, and ſpreads delight through all its faculties.

Addiſon, Spectator.

It is impoſſible for us to behold the divine works with coldneſs or indifference, or to ſurvey ſo many beauties, without a ſecret ſatisfaction and complacency. *Ibid.*

In both of theſe inſtances, little or nothing is added by the ſecond member of the ſentence to what was already expreſſed in the firſt.

Neither is any condition of life more honourable in the ſight of God than another, otherwiſe he would be a reſpecter of perſons, which he aſſures us he is not.

Swift's Sermon on Mutual Subjection.

It is evident that this laſt clauſe does not a little enervate the thought, as it implies but too plainly, that without this aſſurance from God himſelf, we ſhould naturally conclude him to be of a character very different from that here given by the preacher.

III. In conſtructing a ſentence, particular attention ſhould be paid to the uſe of copulatives, relatives, and all the particles employed in tranſition and connection. The graceful-

neſs and ſtrength of a period muſt in a great meaſure depend on words of this deſcription. They are the joints and hinges upon which all ſentences turn. The various modes of uſing them are ſo numerous, that no particular rules reſpecting them can be formed. We muſt be directed by an attentive conſideration of the practice of ſtandard writers, joined with frequent trials of the different effects produced by a different application of thoſe particles. Without pretending to exhauſt the ſubject, I ſhall here collect a few obſervations which ſeem to be of importance.

What is called ſplitting of particles, or ſeparating a preposition from the noun which it governs, ought always to be avoided.

As the ſtrength of our cauſe does not depend *upon*, ſo neither is it to be decided by, any critical *points* of hiſtory, chronology, or language. *Berkeley's Minute Philoſopher.*

In ſuch inſtances, we feel a ſort of pain from the revulſion, or violent ſeparation of two things which, by their nature, ſhould be cloſely united. We are obliged to reſt for ſome time on the propoſition itſelf, which carries no ſignificancy, till it is joined to its proper ſubſtantive noun.

Some writers needleſsly multiply demonſtrative and relative particles, by the frequent uſe of ſuch phraſeology as this: "There is nothing which diſguſts us ſooner than the empty pomp of language." In introducing a ſubject, or laying down a propoſition to which we demand particular attention, this ſort of ſtyle is very proper. But in the ordinary current of diſcourſe, it is better to expreſs ourſelves more ſimply and briefly: "Nothing diſguſts us ſooner than the empty pomp of language."

On the other hand, the relative particles are frequently omitted, when the author thinks his meaning may be underſtood without them:

I had ſeveral men (who) died in my ſhip of calentures. —
Swift's Travels of Gulliver.

It appears that numbers of the officers and ſoldiers in the camp of Lepidus were prepared for the part (which) they were to act on this occaſion.
Ferguſon's Hiſtory of the Roman Republic.

To contain the ſpirit of anger, is the worthieſt diſcipline (which) we can put ourſelves to. *Steele, Spectator.*

Though this elliptical ſtyle be intelligible, and may be allowed in converſation and epiſtolary writing, yet in all compoſitions of a ſerious or dignified kind, it is unbecoming, except where we have occaſional recourſe to it, merely for the ſake of avoiding the too frequent recurrence of *who* or *which*.

With regard to the copulative particle *and*, ſeveral obſervations are to be made.—It is evident, that the unneceſſary repetition of it enfeebles ſtyle; and produces an effect ſimilar to that of the vulgar phraſe *and ſo*, which occurs ſo frequently in common converſation.

The academy ſet up by Cardinal Richelieu, to amuſe the wits of that age *and* country, *and* divert them from raking into his politics *and* miniſtry, brought this in vogue; *and* the French wits have for this laſt age been in a manner wholly turned to the refinement of their language, *and* indeed with ſuch ſucceſs, that it can hardly be excelled, and runs equally through their verſe *and* their proſe. *Temple on Poetry.*

And then thoſe who are of an inferior condition, that they labour *and* be diligent in the work of an honeſt calling, for this is privately good *and* profitable unto men, *and* to their families; *and* thoſe who are above this neceſſity, *and* are in a better capacity, to maintain good works properly ſo called, works of pity, *and* charity, *and* juſtice; that they be careful to promote *and* advance them, according to their power *and* opportunity, becauſe theſe things are publicly good *and* beneficial to mankind. *Tillotſon's Sermons.*

In the firſt of theſe ſentences, the conjunction is ſeven times introduced, in the laſt, eleven times.

A redundancy of copulatives may be proper upon ſome occaſions: Dining one day at an alderman's in the city, Peter obſerved him expatiating after the manner of his brethren, in the praiſes of his ſirloin of beef. "Beef (ſaid the ſage magiſtrate) is the king of meat. Beef comprehends in it the quinteſſence of patridge, and quail, and veniſon, and pheaſant, and plumb-pudding, and cuſtard."

Swift's Tale of a Tub.

Here the repetition of the conjunction is ſufficiently characteriſtic of the drowſy ſpeaker.

"The army was compoſed of Grecians and Carians, and Lycians, and Pamphilians, and Phrygians."

A leiſurely ſurvey, which is promoted by the uſe of ſo many copulatives, makes the parts ſeem more numerous than they would appear on a haſty inſpection. In the latter caſe, the army is viewed as one diſtinct group: in the former, we ſeem to take an accurate review of the reſpective troops of each nation.

Theſe are inſtances in which a multiplicity of conjunctions may be uſed with propriety: but it is alſo to be obſerved, that the total omiſſion of them often produces a good effect. Longinus obſerves, that it animates a period to drop the copulative*; and he produces the following example from Xenophon: "Cloſing their ſhields together, they were impelled, they fought, they ſlew, they were ſlain.†" I ſhall quote an inſtance of the ſame kind from Cæſar: "Our men, having diſcharged their javelins, attack with ſword in hand: on a ſudden the cavalry make their appearance behind; other bodies of men are ſeen drawing near; the enemies turn their backs; the horſemen meet them in their flight; a great ſlaughter enſues‡". From theſe obſervations it will appear, that an attention to the ſeveral caſes, when it is proper to omit, and when to redouble the copulative, is of conſiderable importance to all thoſe who ſtudy eloquence. The critics both of ancient and modern times have thought the ſubject worthy of their notice.

IV. In arranging a ſentence, the moſt important words ought to be placed in that ſituation in which they will make the ſtrongeſt impreſſion. Every one muſt perceive, that in all ſentences there are certain words of ſuperior importance: and it is equally obvious that thoſe words ſhould ſtand in a conſpicuous and diſtinguiſhed place. But the preciſe ſtation which they ought to occupy, cannot be aſcertained by any general rule. Their poſition muſt vary with the nature of the ſentence. Perſpicuity muſt ever be ſtudied in the firſt place: and the ſtructure of our language allows no great

* Longini de Sublimitate, § xix.

† Xenophon. de Rebus Græcis lib. iv. nec non Orat. de Agiſilao.

‡ Cæſar, de Bello Gallico, lib. vii.

liberty in the choice of collocation. For the moſt part, the important words are placed at the beginning of the ſentence; as in the following examples:

The ſenſe of a common danger, and the aſſaults of an enemy, have been frequently uſeful to nations, by uniting their members more firmly together, and by preventing the ſeceſſions and actual ſeparations in which their civil diſcord might otherwiſe terminate. *Ferguson on Civil Society.*

The ſtate of ſociety, which precedes the knowledge of an extenſive property, and the meanneſſes which flow from refinement and commerce, is in a high degree propitious to women. *Stuart's View of Society.*

Human ſociety is in its moſt corrupted ſtate at that period, when men have loſt their original independence and ſimplicity of manners, but have not attained that degree of refinement which introduces a ſenſe of decorum and of propriety in conduct, as a reſtraint on thoſe paſſions which lead to heinous crimes. *Robertson's View of Society.*

The fabric of ſuperſtition has, in our age and nation, received much ruder ſhocks than it had ever felt before; and through the chinks and breaches of our priſon, we ſee ſuch glimmerings of light, and feel ſuch refreſhing airs of liberty, as daily raiſe our ardour for more.

Burke's Vindication of Natural Society.

It ſeems the moſt natural order, thus to place in the front that which forms the chief object of the propoſition to be laid down. Sometimes, however, it is of advantage to ſuſpend the meaning for a while, and then unfold it completely at the cloſe of the period.

Why their knowledge is more than ours, I know not what reaſon can be given, but the unſearchable will of the Supreme Being. *Johnson's Raſſelas.*

On whatever ſide we contemplate Homer, what principally ſtrikes us, is his wonderful invention.

Pope's Preface to Homer.

The Greek and Latin authors poſſeſſed the liberty of inverſion in a more eminent degree. The genius of the languages in which they wrote always permitted them to chuſe the moſt advantageous ſituation for every word: and this privi-

lege tended greatly to add force and vivacity to their ſentences. The more ancient Engliſh writers have endeavoured to imitate them in this reſpect; but their forced and unnatural conſtructions often produce obſcurity. Our language, as it is now written and ſpoken, will not admit ſuch liberties. Yet the inverted ſtyle may ſtill be employed within certain limits. In the following inſtance an inverted arrangement of words is adopted with evident propriety:

The praiſe of judgment Virgil has juſtly conteſted with him, but his invention remains yet unrivalled.

Pope's Preface to Homer.

It is evident, that, in order to give this ſentence its due force, by properly contraſting the two capital words *judgment* and *invention*, this is a more happy arrangement than if the author had thus followed the natural order; "Virgil has juſtly conteſted with him the praiſe of judgment, but his invention remains yet unrivalled."

Such inverſions as our language admits, are more frequently practiſed by ſome writers than by others; by Shafteſbury, for inſtance, much more than by Addiſon. It is to this ſort of arrangement that Shafteſbury's ſtyle is chiefly indebted for its appearance of ſtrength, dignity, and varied harmony. But if he has more pomp and majeſty than Addiſon, he certainly muſt be allowed to poſſeſs leſs eaſe and ſimplicity, which are beauties highly deſerving a writer's attention.

Whether we practiſe inverſion or not, and in whatever part of the ſentence we diſpoſe of the moſt important words, it is always a point of great moment, that theſe words ſtand clear from others which would entangle them. Thus, when there are any limitations of time, or place, or of any other deſcription, which the principal object of the ſentence requires to have connected with it, we muſt be careful to diſpoſe of them, ſo as to avoid clouding that object, or burying it under a load of circumſtances. This is very happily effected in the following quotation, in which the author is ſpeaking of modern poets, as compared with the ancient:

If, whilſt they profeſs only to pleaſe, they ſecretly adviſe, and give inſtruction, they may now, perhaps, as well as formerly, be eſteemed with juſtice the beſt and moſt honourable among authors.

Shafteſbury's Advice to an Author.

This ſentence is ſkilfully conſtructed. It contains a great number of circumſtances neceſſary to qualify the meaning; yet theſe are placed with ſo much art, that they neither weaken nor embarraſs. Let us examine what would be the effect of a different arrangement; "If, whilſt they profeſs to pleaſe only, they adviſe and give inſtruction, ſecretly, they may be eſteemed the beſt and moſt honourable among authors, with juſtice, perhaps now, as well as formerly." Here we have preciſely the ſame words and the ſame ſenſe; but, in conſequence of the circumſtances being ſo intermingled as to clog the capital words, the whole becomes perplexed, and totally devoid of grace and ſtrength.

The following ſentence contains a great number of circumſtances diſpoſed with very little ſkill:

And that it was not peculiar to the gift of language or tongues only, to be given at the moment of its exertion, but common likewiſe to all the reſt, will be ſhewn probably, on ſome other occaſion, more at large in a particular treatiſe, which is already prepared by me, on that ſubject.

Middleton's Free Inquiry.

V. Sentences ought never to be concluded with words that make an inconſiderable figure. Such concluſions always have the effect of enfeebling and degrading. There may indeed be ſentences in which the ſtreſs and ſignificancy reſts chiefly upon adverbs, prepoſitions, or ſome other word of the ſame kind. In this caſe they ought to have a principal place allotted to them. No objection, therefore, can be urged againſt ſuch an arrangement as appears in this period: "In their proſperity, my friends ſhall never hear of me; in their adverſity *always*." Here the adverb *always*, being an emphatical word, is ſo placed, as to make a ſtrong impreſſion.

The ſubſequent quotation furniſhes an inſtance of the ſame kind:

I ſat in my old friend's ſeat; I heard the roar of mirth and gaiety around me: poor Ben Silton! I gave thee a tear *then*: accept of one cordial drop that falls to thy memory *now*.

Mackenzie's Man of Feeling.

But in the following examples, we find words of a like deſcription occupying the ſame ſtation, without any acknowledged right to ſuch diſtinction:

This agreement of mankind is not confined to the taſte *ſolely*.

Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.

The other ſpecies of motion are incidentally blended *alſo*.

Harris's Philoſophical Arrangements.

He thinks it much more likely that ſuch a ſyſtem ſhould continue to be admired and praiſed in idea, than eſtabliſhed in fact; and if it happens ever to be eſtabliſhed, he does not imagine it can be ſupported *long*.

Bolingbroke's Diſſertation on Parties.

Since my late arrival in Ireland, I have found a very unuſual, but, I doubt not, very juſt complaint concerning the ſcarcity of money; which occaſioned many airy propoſitions for the remedy of it, and among the reſt that of raiſing ſome, or all of the coins *here*.

Temple on the Advancement of Trade.

We ſhould particularly avoid concluding a period with particles which mark the caſes of nouns and prepoſitions combined with verbs *of*, *to*, *from*, *with*, *by*, *upon*, *againſt*, &c. It would have a very diſagreeable effect to ſay, "Avarice is a crime which men who paſs for wiſe, are often guilty of." Such phraſeology ought on no occaſion to be adopted. For, beſides the want of dignity which ariſes from thoſe monoſyllables being placed at the cloſe, the mind cannot avoid reſting for a little upon the word that concludes the ſentence: and, as theſe prepoſitions have no import of their own, but merely ſerve to point out the relation of other words, it is diſagreeable thus to be left pauſing on a word, which of itſelf cannot produce any idea, or preſent any picture to the fancy.

I therefore thought it neceſſary to fix and determine the notion of theſe two words, as I intend to make uſe of them in the thread of my following ſpeculations, that the reader may conceive rightly what is the ſubject which I proceed *upon*.

Addiſon's Spectator.

There needs no more than to make ſuch a regiſtry only voluntary, to avoid all the difficulties that can be raiſed, and which are not too captious, or too trivial to take notice *of*.

Temple on Popular Diſcontents.

By theſe means the country loſes the expence of many of

the richeſt perſons or families at home, and mighty ſums of money muſt needs go over from hence into England, which the great ſtock of rich native commodities here can make the only amends *for*. *Temple on the Advancement of Trade.*

No one pretends to be a judge in poetry or the fine arts, who has not both a natural and cultivated reliſh for them; and ſhall the narrow-minded children of earth, abſorbed in low purſuits, dare to treat as viſionary, objects which they have never made themſelvs acquainted *with?*

Barbauld on the Devotion of Taste.

The pronoun *it* ought as ſeldom as poſſible to be placed at the cloſe of the ſentence. When it immediately ſucceeds a verb, its effect is not ſo diſagreeable; but when joined with a prepoſition, it is intolerable.

When you are pinched with any former, and yet unrepealed act of parliament, you declare, that, in ſome caſes, you will not be obliged *by it*. *Dryden's Epiſtle on the Whigs.*

There is not, in my opinion, a more pleaſing and triumphant conſideration in religion, than this of the perpetual progreſs which the ſoul makes towards the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at a period *in it*. *Spectator.*

I would humbly offer an amendment, that inſtead of the word *Chriſtianity*, may be put *religion* in general; which, I conceive, will much better anſwer all the good ends propoſed by the projectors *of it*.

Swift's Argument againſt Abolishing Chriſtianity.

Every nature you perceive, is either too excellent to want it, or too baſe to be capable *of it*.

Harris's Dialogue concerning Art.

Although it is not always neceſſary, that every thing advanced by the ſpeaker ſhould convey information to the hearer, it is neceſſary that he ſhould believe himſelf informed by what is ſaid, ere he can be convinced or perſuaded *by it*.

Campbell's Philoſophy of Rhetoric.

It is ſurpriſing that writers who have paid the ſmalleſt attention to elegance, ſhould allow the word *it* to conclude two ſucceſſive periods. Yet inſtances of this kind ſometimes occur.

In like manner, if a perſon in broad day light were falling aſleep, to introduce a ſudden darkneſs would prevent his ſleep for that time, though ſilence and darkneſs in themſelves, and not ſuddenly introduced, are very favourable to *it*. This I knew only by conjecture on the analogy of the ſenſes when I firſt digeſted theſe obſervations; but I have ſince experienced *it*. *Burke on the Sublime and Beautiful.*

The general idea of good or bad fortune, therefore, creates ſome concern for the perſon who has met with it; but the general idea of provocation excites no ſympathy with the anger of the man who has received *it*. Nature, it ſeems, teaches us to be more averſe to enter into this paſſion, and, till informed of its cauſe, to be diſpoſed rather to take part againſt *it*. *Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments.*

VI. In the members of a ſentence where two objects are either compared or contraſted, ſome reſemblance in the language and conſtruction ſhould be preſerved. To illuſtrate this rule, I ſhall produce various inſtances of deviations from it; beginning with reſemblances expreſſed in words which have no reſemblance.

I have obſerved of late, the ſtyle of ſome great *miniſters* very much to exceed that of any other *productions*.

Swift on the English Tongue.

Inſtead of *productions*, which bear no reſemblance to miniſters great or ſmall, the author ought to have employed the word *writers* or *authors*.

I cannot but fancy, however, that this imitation, which paſſes ſo currently with *other judgments*, muſt at ſome time or other have ſtuck a little with *your Lordship*.

Shaftesbury on Enthusiasm.

This ſentence ought to have ſtood thus: "I cannot but fancy, however, that this imitation, which paſſes ſo currently with *others*, muſt at ſome time or other have ſtuck with *your Lordship*."

It is a ſtill greater deviation from congruity, to affect not only variety in the words, but alſo in the conſtruction. There is a fault of this kind in the following ſentence, in which the author is ſpeaking of Shakeſpeare:

There may remain a ſuſpicion that we over-rate the great-

neſs of his genius, in the ſame manner as bodies appear more gigantic on account of their being diſproportioned and mis-ſhapen. *Hume's History of England.*

This is ſtudying variety where the beauty lies in uniformity. The ſentence ought to have been conſtructed in this manner: "There may remain a ſuſpicion that we over-rate the greatneſs of his genius, in the ſame manner as we over-rate the greatneſs of bodies that are diſproportioned and mis-ſhapen."

Attention ſhould alſo be paid to the length of members that ſignify the reſembling objects. To produce a reſemblance between ſuch members, they ought not only to be conſtructed in the ſame manner, but alſo to be as nearly as poſſible of the ſame length. By neglecting this circumſtance, the ſubſequent example is rendered liable to exception:

As the performance of all other religious duties will not avail in the ſight of God, *without charity*; ſo neither will the diſcharge of all other miniſterial duties avail in the ſight of men, *without a faithful diſcharge of this principal duty.* *Bolingbroke's Diſſertation on Parties.*

In the following paſſage, all the errors are accumulated which a period expreſſing a reſemblance can well admit:

Miniſters are anſwerable for every thing done to the prejudice of the conſtitution, in the ſame proportion as the preſervation of the conſtitution in its purity and vigour, or the perverting and weakening it, are of greater conſequence to the nation, than any other inſtances of good or bad government. *Bolingbroke's Diſſertation on Parties.*

As reſemblance ought to be ſtudied in the words which expreſs two reſembling objects, ſo oppoſition ought to be ſtudied in the words which expreſs two contraſted objects. The following examples contain deviations from this rule:

A friend exaggerates a man's virtues, an enemy inflames his crimes. *Addiſon, Spectator.*

Here the oppoſition in the thought it neglected in the words, which at firſt view ſeem to import, that the friend and the enemy are employed in different matters, without any relation to each other, whether of reſemblance or of oppoſition. The contraſt or oppoſition will be better marked by expreſſing the idea as follows: "A friend exaggerates a man's virtues, an enemy his crimes."

The wife man is happy when he gains his own approbation; the fool when he recommends himſelf to the applauſe of thoſe about him. *Spectator.*

The ſentence ought to have ſtood thus: "The wiſe man is happy when he gains his own approbation; the fool when he gains that of others."

The laughers will be for thoſe who have moſt wit; the ſerious part of mankind for thoſe who have moſt reaſon on their ſide. *Bolingbroke's Diſſertation on Parties.*

The oppoſition would have been more completely expreſſed in this manner: "The laughers will be for thoſe who have moſt wit; the ſerious for thoſe who have moſt reaſon on their ſide."

In the following paſſage, we find two great poets very ſkilfully contraſted with each other:

Homer was the greater genius; Virgil the better artiſt; in the one, we muſt admire the man; in the other, the work. Homer hurries us with a commanding impetuoſity; Virgil leads us with an attractive majeſty. Homer ſcatters with a generous profuſion; Virgil beſtows with a careful magnificence. Homer, like the Nile, pours out his riches with a ſudden overflow; Virgil, like a river in its banks, with a conſtant ſtream. *Pope's Preface to Homer.*

This picture, however, would have been more finiſhed, if to the Nile ſome particular river had been oppoſed.

CHAP. X.

OF HARMONY IN THE STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES.

ALTHOUGH ſound is a quality of much leſs importance than ſenſe, yet it muſt not be altogether diſregarded. For, as ſounds are the vehicle of our ideas, there muſt always be a pretty intimate connection between the idea which is conveyed, and the ſound which conveys it. Pleaſing ideas can hardly be tranſmitted to the mind by means of harſh and diſagreeable ſounds. At theſe the mind immediately revolts,

Nothing can enter into the affections which ſtumbles at the threſhold by offending the ear. Muſic has naturally a great power over all men to prompt and facilitate certain emotions: inſomuch, that there are ſcarcely any diſpoſitions which we wiſh to raiſe in others, but certain ſounds may be found concordant to theſe diſpoſitions, and tending to excite and promote them. Language is to a certain degree poſſeſſed of the ſame power. Not content with ſimply interpreting our ideas to the hearer, it can communicate them enforced by correſponding ſounds; and to the pleaſure of imparted knowledge, can add the new and ſeparate pleaſure of melody.

In the harmony of ſentences, two things may be conſidered; agreeable ſound, or modulation, in general without any particular expreſſion, and ſound ſo ordered, as to become expreſſive of the ſenſe.

Let us firſt conſider ſound, in general, as the property of a well-conſtructed ſentence. The muſical cadence of a ſentence will depend upon two circumſtances; the choice of words, and the arrangement of them.

With regard to the choice of words, little can be ſaid, unleſs we were to deſcend into a tedious and frivolous detail concerning the powers of the ſeveral letters, or ſimple ſounds, of which ſpeech is compoſed. It is evident, that thoſe words are moſt agreeable to the ear which are compoſed of ſmooth and liquid ſounds, where there is a proper intermixture of vowels and conſonants, without too many harſh conſonants claſhing with each other, or too many open vowels in ſucceſſion, to cauſe a hiatus or diſagreeable aperture of the mouth. It may always be aſſumed as a principle, that whatever words are difficult in pronunciation, are, in the ſame proportion, harſh and painful to the ear. Vowels add ſoftneſs, conſonants ſtrength, to the ſound of words. The melody of language requires a due proportion of both, and will be deſtroyed by an exceſs of either. Long words are commonly more agreeable to the ear than monoſyllables. They pleaſe it by the ſucceſſion of ſounds which they preſent: and accordingly the moſt muſical language poſſeſs them in the greateſt abundance. Among words of any length, thoſe are the moſt muſical which do not wholly conſiſt either of long or ſhort ſyllables, but contain a due intermixture of both.

The harmony which reſults from a proper arrangement of the words and members of a period, is a more complex ſub-

ject. However well chosen and well-sounding the words themselves may be, yet if they be ill-disposed, the music of the sentence is utterly lost. In the harmonious arrangements of his periods, no writer, ancient or modern, can be brought into competition with Cicero. He has studied this with the utmost care; and was fond, perhaps to excess, of what he calls the "plena ac numerosa oratio." We need only open his writings, to find instances that will render the effect of musical cadence sensible to every ear. And in our own language, the following passage may be quoted as an instance of harmonious construction:

We shall conduct you to a hill-side, laborious, indeed, at the first ascent; but else so smooth, so green, so full of goodly prospects, and melodious sounds on every side, that the harp of Orpheus was not more charming.

Milton's Tractate of Education.

Every thing in this sentence conspires to promote the harmony. The words are happily chosen, being full of soft and liquid sounds; *laborious, smooth, green, goodly, melodious, charming:* and these words are so skilfully arranged, that, were we to alter the collocation of any one of them, the melody would sustain a sensible injury. The members of the period swell beautifully above each other, till the ear, prepared by this gradual rise, is conducted to that full close on which it always rests with pleasure.

The structure of sentences, then, being susceptible of very considerable melody, our next enquiry should be, how his melodious structure is formed, what are its principles, and by what law it is regulated. This subject has been treated with great copiousness by the ancient critics.* But the languages of Greece and Rome were more susceptible than ours, of the graces and powers of melody. The quantities of their syllables were more fixed and determinate; their words were longer, and more sonorous; their method of varying the terminations of nouns and verbs both introduced a greater variety of liquid sounds, and freed them from that multiplicity of little auxiliary words which we are under the necessity of

* The reader may consult Dionysius *De Structurâ Orationis* Demetrius *De Elocutione*, Cicero *De Oratore*, and Quinctilian *De Institutione Oratoria*.

employing; and, what is of the greateſt conſequence, the inverſions which their languages allowed, gave them the power of placing their words in whatever order was moſt ſuited to a muſical arrangement. In conſequence of the ſtructure of their languages, and of their manner of pronouncing them, the muſical cadence of ſentences produced a greater effect in public ſpeaking among them, than it could poſſibly do in any modern oration. It is farther to be obſerved, that for every ſpecies of muſic they had a finer reliſh than prevails among us: it was more generally ſtudied, and applied to a greater variety of objects. Our northern ears are too coarſe and obtuſe. And by our ſimple and plainer method of pronunciation, ſpeech is accompanied with leſs melody than it was among the Greeks and Romans.

For theſe reaſons, it would be fruitleſs to beſtow the ſame attention upon the harmonious ſtructure of our ſentences, as was beſtowed by theſe ancient nations. The doctrine of the Greek and Roman critics, on this head, has induced ſome to imagine, that our proſe writings may be regulated by ſpondees, and trochees, iambuſes and pæons, and other metrical feet.* But, to refute this notion, nothing farther is neceſſary than its being applied to practice.

* Some writers have alſo ſuppoſed that the Engliſh language would admit of the meaſures of Greek and Latin poetry. "It is impoſſible," ſays Goldſmith, "that the ſame meaſure, compoſed of the ſame times, ſhould have a good effect upon the ear in one language, and a bad effect in another. The truth is, we have been accuſtomed from our infancy to the numbers of Engliſh poetry, and the very ſound and ſignification of the words diſpoſes the ear to receive them in a certain manner; ſo that its diſappointment muſt be attended with a diſagreeable ſenſation. In imbibing the firſt rudiments of education, we acquire, as it were, another ear for the numbers of Greek and Latin poetry, and this, being reſerved entirely for the ſounds and ſignifications of the words that conſtitude thoſe dead languages, will not eaſily accommodate itſelf to the ſounds of our vernacular tongue, though conveyed in the ſame time and meaſure. In a word, Latin and Greek have annexed to them the ideas of the ancient meaſure, from which they are not eaſily disjoined. But we will venture to ſay, this difficulty might be ſurmounted by an effort of attention, and a little practice; and in that caſe we

Although this musical arrangement cannot be reduced to a system, yet it demands a very considerable share of attention. It is chiefly owing to the neglect of it, that British eloquence still remains in a state of infancy. The growth of eloquence, indeed, even in those countries where she flourished most, has ever been very slow. Athens had been in possession of all other polite improvements long before her pretensions to the persuasive arts were in any degree considerable: and the earliest orator of note among the Romans did not appear sooner than about a century before Cicero.

That great master of persuasion, taking notice of this remarkable circumstance, assigns it as an evidence of the superior difficulty of his favourite art. There may be some truth in the observation: but whatever the cause may have been, the fact is undeniable. Accordingly, eloquence has by no means made equal advances in our own country, with her sister arts: and though we have seen many excellent poets, and a few good painters, rise up amongst us, yet I know not whether, besides Burke, our nation can boast of one accomplished orator. This circumstance will appear surprising, when it is considered, that we have a profession set apart for the purposes of persuasion; a profession which is conversant in the most animating topics of rhetoric.*

Among the pricipal defects of our British orators, their general disregard of harmony has been least observed. It would be injustice, indeed, to deny, that we have some oratorical performances tolerably musical; but it must be acknowledged, that, for the most part, this is more the effect of accident than design, and rather to be attributed to the power of our language, than to the skill of our orators.

Dr. Tillotson, who is frequently mentioned as having carried this species of eloquence to its highest perfection, seems to have no kind of rhetorical numbers; and no man had ever less pretension to genuine oratory, than this celebrated prea-

should, in time, be as well pleased with English as with Latin hexameters." *Goldsmith's Essays*, vol. II. Essay xix.

* The subjects they treat are of the last importance; the duties we owe the Supreme Being, the dispensations of his providence, the eternal obligations of morality, the charms of virtue, and the delightful exercises of justice, mercy, and charity. *Langhorne's Solyman and Almena.*

cher. If any thing could raiſe a flame of eloquence in the breaſt of an orator, there is no occaſion on which it would be more likely to break out, than in celebrating departed merit: yet the two ſermons which he preached upon the death Dr. Gooch and of Dr. Whitchot, are as cold and languid performances as were ever produced on ſuch an animating ſubject. It is indeed to be regretted, that he who abounds with ſuch noble and generous ſentiments, ſhould want the art of diſplaying them to their full advantage; that the ſublime in morals ſhould not be attended with a ſuitable elevation of language. His words are commonly ill-choſen, and always ill-placed; his periods are both tedious and inharmonious; as his metaphors are generally mean and ridiculous. It were eaſy to produce numberleſs inſtances of the truth of this aſſertion. Thus in his ſermon preached before the princeſs of Denmark, he talks of *ſqueezing* a parable, *ſharking ſhifts*, *thrusting* religion *by*, *driving a* ſtrict *bargain* with God; and, ſpeaking of the day of judgment, deſcribes the world as *cracking about our ears*. In juſtice to the oratorical character of this moſt valuable prelate, it muſt however be acknowledged, that there is a noble ſimplicity in ſome few of his ſermons. His excellent diſcourſe on ſincerity deſerves to be mentioned with applauſe.

But to ſhew his difficiency in the quality of which I am now treating, the following quotation will be ſufficient:

One might be apt to think at firſt view, that this parable was *overdone*, and wanted ſomething of a due decorum; it being hardly credible, that a man after he had been ſo mercifully dealt *withal*, as, upon his humble requeſt, to have ſo *huge* a debt ſo freely forgiven, ſhould, whilſt the memory of ſo much mercy was freſh *upon him*, even in the very next moment, *handle* his fellow ſervant, who had made the ſame humble requeſt to him which he had done to his lord, with ſo much roughneſs and cruelty, for ſo inconſiderable a ſum.

Tillotſon's Sermons.

Not to mention other objections which might be raiſed againſt this period, it is harſh and unmuſical throughout. The concluding members, which ought to have been full and flowing, are moſt miſerably looſe and disjointed. If the delicacy of Cicero's ear was ſo exquiſitively refined, as not always to be ſatisfied even with the numbers of Demoſthenes, how

would it have been offended by the harſhneſs and diſſonance of ſo unharmonious a ſentence?

Nothing tends to throw our eloquence at a greater diſtance from that of the ancients, than this Gothic arrangement; as thoſe wonderful effects which ſometimes attended their elocution were, in all probibility, chiefly owing to their ſkill in muſical concords. Is was by the charm of numbers, united with the ſtrength of reaſon, that Cicero confounded the audacious Catiline, and filenced the eloquent Hortenſius. It was this that deprived Curio of all power of recollection, when he roſe up to oppoſe that great maſter of rhetoric; it was this that made even Cæſar himſelf tremble; nay, what is yet more extraordinary, made Cæſar alter his determined purpoſe, and acquit the man he had reſolved to condemn.

It will not be ſuſpected, that too much is here attributed to the power of numerous compoſition, when we recollect an inſtance which Cicero produces of its wonderful effect. He informs us, that he was himſelf a witneſs of its influence as Carbo was once haranguing the people. It was aſtoniſhing, ſays he, to obſerve the general applauſe which burſt from the aſſembly when that orator pronounced the following ſentence: "Patris dictum ſapiens temeritas filii comprobavit." Theſe words, perhaps, will not greatly affect a modern ear; and indeed it is probable that we are ignorant of the art of pronouncing the period with its genuine emphaſis and cadence. We are certain, however, that the muſic of it conſiſted in the *dichorce* with which it is terminated; for Cicero himſelf aſſures us, that if the final meaſure had been changed, and the words placed in a different order, their whole effect would have been entirely deſtroyed.

The art of numerous arrangement was introduced among the Greeks by Thraſymachus, though ſome of the admirers of Iſocrates attributed the intention to the latter. It does not appear to have been ſtudied by the Romans until about the age of Cicero; and even then it was by no means univerſally received. The ancient mode of compoſition had ſtill many admirers, who were ſuch enthuſiaſts with regard to antiquity, that they adopted her very defects. A diſpoſition of the ſame kind may perhaps prevent its being much cultivated in Britain: and while Tillotſon ſhall maintain his authority as an orator, it is not to be expected, that any great advances will be made in this ſpecies of eloquence. That

ſtrength of underſtanding, and ſolidity of reaſon, which forms ſo conſpicuous a part of the natural character, may alſo ſerve to encreaſe the difficulty of reconciling us to a ſtudy of this kind; as at firſt glance it may ſeem to lead an orator from his grand and principal aim, and tempt him to make a ſacrifice of ſenſe to ſound. It muſt be acknowledged, indeed, that in the times which ſucceeded the diſſolution of the Roman republic, this art was ſo perverted from its true end, as to become the ſole ſtudy of their enervated orators. Pliny the younger often complains of this contemptible affectation, and the polite author of that elegant dialogue which, with very little probability, is attributed either to Tacitus or Quinctilian, aſſures us it was the ridiculous boaſt of certain orators in the time of the declenſion of genuine eloquence, that their harangues were capable of being ſet to muſic, and ſung upon the ſtage. But it muſt be remembered, that the true art now recommended, is deſigned to aid, not to ſuperſede reaſon; it is ſo far from being neceſſarily effeminate, that it adds not only grace but ſtrength to the powers of perſuaſion. Cicero and Quinctilian have laid it down as an invariable rule, that numerous compoſition muſt never appear the effect of labour in the orator; that the tuneful flow of his periods muſt always ſeem the reſult of their caſual diſpoſition; and that it is the higheſt offence againſt the art, to weaken the expreſſion for the ſake of giving a more muſical tone to the cadence.

There are two circumſtances on which the muſic of a ſentence chiefly depends; the proper diſtribution of its ſeveral members, and the cloſe or cadence of the whole.

Whatever is eaſy and agreeable in the pronunciation, has always a grateful ſound to the ear: and that which is difficult in the pronunciation, can never be poſſeſſed of melody. The facility with which any ſentence is recited, muſt, in a great meaſure, depend upon the proper diſpoſition of the pauſes. They ought to be ſo diſtributed, as to render the courſe of the breathing eaſy, and at the ſame time ſhould fall at ſuch diſtances, as to bear a certain muſical proportion to each other. This rule will be beſt illuſtrated by examples.

This diſcourſe concerning the eaſineſs of God's commands does, all along, ſuppoſe and acknowledge the difficulties of the firſt entrance upon a religious courſe, except, only in

thoſe perſons who have had the happineſs to be trained up to religion by the eaſy and inſenſible degrees of a pious and virtuous education. *Tillotſon's Sermons.*

This ſentence is in ſome degree harſh and unpleaſant; it contains no more than one conſiderable pauſe, which falls between the two members; and each of theſe members is ſo long, as to occaſion a difficulty in breathing while it is pronounced. The following are inſtances of a different kind:

He muſt diveſt himſelf of the prejudices of his age and country; he muſt conſider right and wrong in their abſtracted and invariable ſtate; he muſt diſregard preſent laws and opinions, and riſe to general and tranſcendental truths, which will always be the ſame: he muſt therefore content himſelf with the ſlow progreſs of his name; contemn the praiſe of his own time, and commit his claims to the juſtice of poſterity. *Johnſon's Raſſelas.*

When thine aching eye ſhall look forward to the end that is far diſtant; and when behind thou ſhalt find no retreat; when thy ſteps ſhall faulter, and thou ſhalt tremble at the depth beneath, which thought itſelf is not able to fathom; then ſhall the angel of retribution lift his inexorable hand againſt thee; from the irremeable way ſhall thy feet be ſmitten; thou ſhalt plunge into the burning flood, and though thou ſhalt live forever, thou ſhalt riſe no more.

Hawkeſworth's Almoran and Hamet.

Porticoes, which had withſtood the aſſaults of time more than two thouſand years; broken columns of different lengths riſing at a conſiderable diſtance within the limits of the ſame pile; ſculptured portals, through whoſe frowning arches the winds paſſed with a hollow murmuring; numberleſs figures engraven on the pilaſters of thoſe portals; and multitudes of hieroglyphics on the different parts of the ſpacious ruin; gave the travellers a mournful and magnificent idea of the priſtine grandeur of this edifice.

Langhorne's Soliman and Almena.

Here every thing is flowing and eaſy. The members of the ſentences bear a juſt proportion to each other: and the reader, therefore, never experiences any difficulty of breathing.

The next thing that claims our attention is, the cloſe or

cadence of the whole ſentence, which, as it is always the part moſt ſenſible to the ear, demands the greateſt care. Upon it the mind pauſes and reſts: it ought therefore to contain nothing harſh or abrupt. When we aim at dignity or elevation, the ſound ſhould be made to ſwell gradually to the end: the longeſt members of the period, and the fulleſt and moſt ſonorous words, ſhould be reſerved for the concluſion. The following ſentence is conſtructed in this manner:

It fills the mind with the largeſt variety of ideas, converſes with its objects at the greateſt diſtance; and continues the longeſt in action, without being tired or ſatiated with its proper enjoyments. *Addiſon, Spectator.*

Every reader muſt be ſenſible of a beauty here, both in the diviſion of the members and pauſes, and the manner in which the ſentence is rounded, and conducted to a full and harmonious cloſe. The beauty, however, would have been more complete, if the ſecond member had been a few ſyllables longer than the firſt.

A falling off towards the cloſe always produces a diſagreeable effect. For this reaſon, pronouns and prepoſitions are as ungracious to the ear, as they are inconſiſtent with ſtrength of expreſſion. The ſenſe and the ſound ſeem to have a mutual influence on each other: that which offends the ear, is apt to mar the ſtrength of the meaning; and that which really degrades the ſenſe appears alſo to have a bad ſound. In general it ſeems to hold, that a muſical cloſe, in our language, requires either the laſt, or the laſt but one, to be a long ſyllable. Words which conſiſt moſtly of ſhort ſyllables, as *contrary*, *retroſpect*, *particular*, ſeldom conclude a ſentence harmoniouſly, unleſs a ſucceſſion of long ſyllables has rendered them agreeable on account of the variety which they introduce.

It is neceſſary, however, to obſerve, that ſentences ſo conſtructed as to make the ſound always ſwell towards the end, and to reſt upon ſyllables of a certain deſcription, give a diſcourſe the tone of declamation. The ear ſoon becomes acquainted with the melody, and is apt to be cloyed with monotony. If we would keep alive the attention of the reader or hearer, if we would preſerve vivacity and ſtrength in our compoſition, we muſt be ſolicitous to vary our meaſures.

This obſervation regards the diſtribution of the members, as well as the cadence of the period. Sentences conſtructed in a ſimilar manner, with the pauſes falling at equal intervals, ſhould never follow each other. Short and long ſentences ought to be properly intermixed, in order to render diſcourſe ſprightly, as well as magnificent. Monotony is the great error into which thoſe writers are apt to fall, who ſtudy harmonious arrangement. A very vulgar ear will enable an author to catch ſome kind of melody, and to form all his ſentences according to it: but this oft recurring modulation will ſoon produce ſatiety and diſguſt. A juſt and correct ear is requiſite for diverſifying the melody: and hence we ſo ſeldom meet with authors remarkably happy in this reſpect.

Though the muſic of ſentences demands a very conſiderable degree of attention, yet this attention muſt be confined within moderate bounds. Every appearance of a writer's affectation of harmony is diſagreeable; eſpecially if the love of it betray him ſo far as to ſacrifice perſpicuity, preciſion, or ſtrength of ſentiment, to ſound. All unmeaning words, introduced merely to round the period, or complete the melody, are great blemiſhes in writing. They are childiſh ornaments, by which a ſentence always loſes more in point of ſignificancy, than it can gain in point of ſound. After all the labour beſtowed by Quinctilian on regulating the meaſures of proſe, he comes at laſt, with his uſual good ſenſe to this concluſion: "Upon the whole, I would rather chuſe, that compoſition ſhould appear rough and harſh, if that be neceſſary, than that it ſhould be enervated and effeminate, ſuch as we find in the ſtyle of too many. Some ſentences, therefore, which we have ſtudiouſly formed into melody, ſhould be thrown looſe, that they may not ſeem too much laboured: nor ought we ever to omit any proper or expreſſive word, for the ſake of ſmoothing a period."*

Hitherto our attention has been directed to agreeable ſound, or modulation, in general. It yet remains to treat of a higher beauty; the ſound adapted to the ſenſe. This beauty may either be attained in proſe or verſe; but in illuſtrating its general principles, the writings of the poets will furniſh us with the moſt copious and ſtriking illuſtrations.

* Quinctilian. de Inſtitut. Orator. lib. ix. cap. iv.

The reſemblance of poetic numbers to the ſubject which they mention or deſcribe, may be conſidered as general or particular, as conſiſting in the flow and ſtructure of a whole paſſage taken together, or as compriſed in the ſound of ſome emphatical and deſcriptive words, or in the cadence and harmony of ſingle verſes.

The general reſemblance of the ſound to the ſenſe is to be found in every language which admits of poetry, in every author whoſe fancy enables him to impreſs images ſtrongly on his own mind, and whoſe choice and variety of language readily ſupplies him with juſt repreſentations. To ſuch a writer it is natural to change his meaſure with his ſubject, even without any effort of the underſtanding, or intervention of the judgment. To revolve jollity and mirth, neceſſarily tunes the voice of a poet to gay and ſprightly notes, as it fires his eye with vivacity; and reflections on gloomy ſituations and diſaſtrous events, will ſadden his numbers as it will cloud his countenance. But in ſuch paſſages, there is only the ſimilitude of pleaſure to pleaſure, and of grief to grief, without any immediate application of particular images. The ſame flow of joyous verſification will celebrate the jollity of marriage, and the exultation of triumph; and the ſame languor of melody will ſuit the complaint of an abſent lover, and the lamentations of a conquered king.

It is ſcarcely to be doubted, that on many occaſions we produce the muſic which we imagine ourſelves to hear; that we modulate the poem by our own diſpoſition, and aſcribe to the numbers the effects of the ſenſe. We may obſerve in real life, that it is not eaſy to deliver a pleaſing meſſage in an unpleaſing manner, and that we readily aſſociate beauty and deformity with thoſe whom we have reaſon to love or hate. Yet it would be too daring to declare, that all the celebrated adaptations of harmony are chimerical, that Homer, Virgil and Milton, paid no extraordinary attention to their numbers in any of thoſe paſſages where the ſound is ſaid to be an echo to the ſenſe.*

There being frequently a ſtrong reſemblance of one ſound to another, it will not be ſurpriſing to find an articulate ſound reſembling one that is not articulate. Of this reſemblance we meet with an exemplification in the following paſſages:

* Johnſon's Rambler, No. 94.

On a ſudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring ſound,
Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harſh thunder. *Milton.*

The impetuous arrow *whizzes* on the wing. *Pope.*

The ſtring, let fly,
Twang'd short and ſharp, like the ſhrill ſwallow's cry.
Pope.

Loud ſounds the air, redoubling ſtrokes on ſtrokes,
On all ſides round the foreſt hurls her oaks
Headlong. Deep echoing groan the thickets brown,
Then *ruſtling*, *crackling*, *crashing*, thunder down.
Pope.

The pilgrim oft
At dead of night 'mid his oraiſon hears
Aghaſt the voice of Time, diſparting towers,
Tumbling all precipitate down-daſh'd,
Rattling around, loud thundering to the moon.
J. Dyer.

That there is any other natural reſemblance of ſound to ſignification, muſt not be taken for granted. There is evidently no ſimilarity between ſound and motion, or between ſound and ſentiment. We are apt to be deceived by an artful pronunciation. The ſame paſſage may be pronounced in many different tones, elevated or humble, ſweet or harſh, briſk or melancholy, ſo as to accord with the ſentiment or thought. This concordance muſt be carefully diſtinguiſhed from that between ſound and ſenſe: which may ſometimes ſubſiſt without any dependence upon artful pronunciation. The latter is the work of the poet; the former muſt be attributed to the reader.

There is another circumſtance which contributes ſtill more to the deceit. Sound and ſenſe being intimately connected, the properties of the one are readily communicated to the other. Thus, for example, the quality of grandeur, of ſweetneſs, or of melancholy, though ſolely belonging to the thought, is transferred to the word by which that quality is expreſſed. In this manner words bear an imaginary reſemblance to thoſe objects of which they are only the arbitrary ſigns.

It is of the greateſt importance, to diſtinguiſh the natural reſemblance of ſound and ſignification, from thoſe artificial reſemblances which have now been deſcribed.

From the inſtances lately adduced, it is evident, that there may be a ſimilarity between ſounds articulate and ſounds inarticulate. But we may ſafely pronounce, that this reſemblance can be carried no farther. The objects of the different ſenſes have no ſimilarity to each other. Sound, whether articulate or inarticulate, bears no kind of analogy to taſte or ſmell; and as little can it reſemble internal ſentiment, feeling, or emotion. Muſt we then admit that nothing but ſound can be imitated by ſound? Taking imitation in its proper ſenſe, as importing a co-incidance between different objects, the propoſition muſt be admitted and yet in many paſſages that are not deſcriptive of ſound, every one muſt be ſenſible of a peculiar concord between the ſound of the words and their meaning. As there can be no doubt of the fact, what remains is, to inquire into its cauſe.

Reſembling cauſes may produce effects which have no reſemblance; and cauſes which have no reſemblance may produce reſembling effects. A magnificent building, for example, does not in any degree reſemble an heroic action; and yet the emotions which they produce, are ſometimes concordant, and bear a reſemblance to each other. We are ſtill more ſenſible of this kind of reſemblance in a ſong where the muſic is properly adapted to the ſentiment. There is no ſimilarity between thought and ſound; but there is the ſtrongeſt ſimilarity between the emotion excited by muſic tender and pathetic, and that excited by the complaint of an unſucceſsful lover. When we apply this obſervation to the preſent ſubject, it will appear that in ſome inſtances, the ſound even of a ſingle word makes an impreſſion ſimilar to that which is produced by the thing it ſignifies. *Running*, *rapidity*, *impetuosity*, *precipitation*, are of this deſcription. Brutal manners produce in the ſpectator an emotion not unlike what is cauſed by a harſh and rough ſound; and hence the beauty of the figurative expreſſion, *rugged* manners. The word *little*, being pronounced with a very ſmall aperture of the mouth, has a weak and faint ſound, which makes an impreſſion reſembling that produced by a diminutive object. This reſemblance of effects is ſtill more remarkable where a number of words are connected to-

gether in a period. Words pronounced in ſucceſſion often produce a ſtrong impreſſion; and when this impreſſion happens to accord with that made by the ſenſe, we are ſenſible of a complex emotion, peculiarly pleaſant; one proceeding from the ſentiment, and one from the melody or ſound of the words. But the chief pleaſure ariſes from having theſe two concordant emotions combined in perfect harmony, and carried on in the mind to a full cloſe.

Except thoſe paſſages in which ſound is deſcribed, all the examples given by critics of ſenſe being imitated by ſound, reſolve themſelves into a reſemblance of effects. Emotions excited by ſound and ſignification may have a mutual reſemblance; but ſound itſelf cannot have a reſemblance to any thing but ſound.

After having ſuggeſted theſe general obſervations, it will be proper to deſcend to particular caſes.

By a number of ſyllables in ſucceſſion, an emotion is ſometimes raiſed, ſimilar to that excited by ſucceſſive motion. In this manner ſlow motion may be juſtly imitated in a verſe where long ſyllables prevail, eſpecially with the aid of a ſlow pronunciation:

Illi inter ſeſe magnâ vi brachia tollunt. *Virgil.*

On the other hand, ſwift motion is imitated by a ſucceſſion of ſhort ſyllables:

Quadrupedante putrem ſonitu quatit ungula campum.
Virgil.

By the frequency of its pauſes, a line compoſed of monoſyllables makes an impreſſion ſimilar to what is made by laborious interrupted motion:

Firſt march the heavy mules ſecurely ſlow;
O'er hills, o'er dales, o'er craggs, o'er rocks they go.
Pope.

With many a weary ſtep, and many a groan,
Up the high hill he heaves a huge round ſtone. *Broome.*

The impreſſion made by rough ſounds in ſucceſſion, reſembles that made by rough or tumultuous motion: and on the other hand, the impreſſion of ſmooth ſounds reſembles that of gentle motion:

Two craggy rocks, projecting to the main,
The roaring wind's tempeſtuous rage reſtrain;

Within, the waves in ſofter murmurs glide,
And ſhips ſecure without their hauſers ride. *Pope.*

Prolonged motion is well expreſſed by an Alexandrine verſe.

The following is an example of *ſlow* motion prolonged:

A needleſs Alexandrine ends the ſong,
That, like a wounded ſnake, drags its ſlow length along.
Pope.

The next example is of *forcible* motion prolonged:

The waves behind impel the waves before,
Wide rolling, foaming, and tumbling on the ſhore.
Pope.

The laſt is of *rapid* motion prolonged:

The huge round ſtone, reſulting with a bound,
Thunders impetuous down, and ſmoaks along the ground.
Broome.

A period conſiſting moſtly of long ſyllables, that is, of ſyllables pronounced ſlow, produces an emotion which bears a faint reſemblance to that excited by gravity and ſolemnity. Hence the beauty of the following verſe:

Olli ſedato reſpondit corde Latinus. *Virgil.*

A ſhort ſyllable made long, or a long ſyllable made ſhort, raiſes, by the difficulty of pronouncing contrary to cuſtom, a feeling ſimilar to that of hard labour:

When Ajax ſtrives ſome rock's *vaſt* weight to throw.
Pope.

This enumeration might be extended to a much greater length; but the examples which have been given, may ſerve as a foundation for the reader's farther inquiries.

I have had occaſion to obſerve, that to complete the reſemblance between ſound and ſenſe, artful pronunciation contributes in no ſmall degree. Pronunciation may therefore be conſidered as a branch of the preſent ſubject; and with ſome obſervations upon it this chapter ſhall be concluded.

To give a juſt idea of pronunciation, it muſt be diſtinguiſhed from ſinging. The latter is carried on by notes, requiring each of them a different aperture of the windpipe: the notes properly belonging to the former, are expreſſed by dif-

ferent apertures of the mouth, without varying the aperture of the windpipe.

In reading, as in ſinging, there is a key-note. Above this note the voice is frequently elevated, to make the ſound correſpond to the elevation of the ſubject. But the mind, in an elevated ſtate, is diſpoſed to action; and therefore in order to reſt, it muſt be brought down to the key-note. Hence the term *cadence*.

The only rule that can be given for directing the pronunciation, is to ſound the words in ſuch a manner as to imitate the things which they ſignify. In pronouncing words denoting ſomething elevated, the voice ought to be raiſed above its ordinary tone. To imitate a ſtern and impetuous paſſion, the words ought to be pronounced rough and loud. A ſweet and kindly paſſion, on the contrary, ought to be imitated by a ſoft and melodious tone of voice. In general, words of the greateſt importance ought to be marked with peculiar emphaſis. Another circumſtance which contributes to the reſemblance between ſenſe and ſound, is the ſlowneſs or rapidity of pronunciation. A period ſhould be pronounced ſlow, when it expreſſes what is ſolemn or deliberate; and quick, when it expreſſes what is lively or impetuous.

This rule might be branched out into many particular obſervations: but theſe do not properly belong to the preſent undertaking, becauſe no language furniſhes words to denote the different degrees of high and low, loud and ſoft, faſt and ſlow. Before theſe circumſtances can be made the ſubject of regular inſtruction, notes muſt be invented reſembling thoſe employed in muſic. We have reaſon to believe, that in Greece every tragedy was accompanied with ſuch notes, to aſcertain the pronunciation: but hitherto the moderns have not thought of this refinement. Cicero indeed, without the help of notes, profeſſes to give rules for aſcertaining the various tones of voice which are proper in expreſſing the different paſſions; and it muſt be acknowledged, that in this attempt he has exhauſted the whole power of language. At the ſame time, it is evident, that theſe rules avail little in point of inſtruction. The very words which he employs, are not intelligible, except to thoſe who are previouſly acquainted with the ſubject.

CHAP. XI.

OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE IN GENERAL.

FIGURES of ſpeech always denote ſome departure from the ſimplicity of expreſſion: they enunciate, after a peculiar manner, the idea we intend to convey, and that with the addition of ſome circumſtance deſigned to render the impreſſion more ſtrong and vivid. When I ſay, "A good man enjoys comfort in the midſt of adverſity," I expreſs my thoughts in the ſimpleſt manner poſſible. But when I ſay, "To the upright there ariſeth light in darkneſs," the ſame ſentiment is expreſſed in a figurative ſtyle: a new circumſtance is introduced; light is put in the place of comfort, and darkneſs is uſed to ſuggeſt the idea of adverſity.

Though figures imply a deviation from what may be reckoned the moſt ſimple form of ſpeech, we are not thence to infer, that they imply any thing uncommon, or unnatural. This is ſo far from being the caſe, that, on many occaſions, they are both the moſt natural, and the moſt common method of uttering our ſentiments. It is impoſſible to compoſe any diſcourſe without making frequent uſe of them; nay, there are few ſentences of any length, in which there does not occur ſome expreſſion that may be termed figurative. Figures are therefore to be accounted part of that language which nature dictates to mankind. They are not the invention of the ſchools, nor the mere product of ſtudy: on the contrary, the moſt illiterate ſpeak in figures, as often perhaps as the moſt learned. Whenever the imagination of the vulgar is powerfully awakened, or their paſſions highly enflamed, they will pour forth a torrent of figurative language, as forcible as could be employed by the moſt artificial declaimer.

"When we attend," ſays Dr. Ferguſon, "to the language which ſavages employ on any ſolemn occaſion, it appears that man is a poet by nature. Whether at firſt obliged by the mere defects of his tongue, and the ſcantineſs of proper expreſſions, or ſeduced by a pleaſure of the fancy in ſtating the analogy of its object, he clothes every conception in image

and metaphor. 'We have planted the tree of peace,' says an American orator; 'we have buried the axe under its roots: we will henceforth repose under its shade; we will join to brighten the chain that binds our nations together.' Such are the collections of metaphor which those nations employ in their public harangues. They have likewise adopted those lively figures, and that daring freedom of language, which the learned have afterwards found so well fitted to express the rapid transitions of the imagination, and the ardors of a passionate mind."*

What then is it that has drawn the attention of critics and rhetoricians so much to these forms of speech? They remarked, that in them consists much of the beauty and force of language; and found them always to bear some character or distinguishing marks, by the help of which they could reduce them under separate classes. To this, perhaps, they owe their name. As the figure or shape of one body distinguishes it from another, so each of these forms of speech has a cast peculiar to itself, which both distinguishes it from the rest, and from the simple form of expression. Simple expression just makes our idea known to others; but figurative language bestows a particular dress upon that idea; a dress which serves to distinguish and adorn it.

Figures in general may be described to be that language which is prompted either by the imagination, or by the passions. Rhetoricians commonly divide them into two great classes, figures of words, and figures of thought. The former are denominated tropes: they consist in the employment of a word to signify something that is different from its original and primitive meaning; so that if you alter the word, you destroy the figure. Thus in the instance lately adduced, the trope consists in "light and darkness" being not meant in a literal sense, but substituted for "comfort and adversity," on account of some resemblance, or analogy which they are supposed to bear to those conditions of life. The other class, termed figures of thought, supposes the words to be used in their proper and literal meaning, and the figure to consist in the turn of the thought. This is the case with personifications, and apostrophes; where, though you vary the words which are used, or translate them from one language into ano-

* Ferguson's Essay on Civil Society, part iii. sect. viii.

[redacted]er, you may ſtill preſerve the ſame figure. This diſtinction, however, is of very ſmall importance: nothing can be built upon it in practice: nor can it always be clearly obſerved. Provided we remember, that figurative language imports ſome colouring of the imagination, or ſome emotion of paſſion, expreſſed in our ſtyle, it is a matter of very little moment, whether we give to ſome particular mode of expreſſion the name of a trope or of a figure.

As it would be tedious to dwell on all the variety of figurative expreſſions which rhetoricians have enumerated, I ſhall only ſelect ſuch figures as moſt frequently occur. The principles and rules laid down concerning them will ſufficiently direct us to the uſe of the reſt, either in proſe or poetry.

CHAP. XII.

OF PERSONIFICATION.

THE boldeſt effort of the imagination ſeems to be that which beſtows ſenſibility and voluntary motion upon things inanimate. At firſt view, one would be diſpoſed to conclude, that this figure borders on the extravagant and ridiculous. For, what can ſeem more remote from the track of reaſonable thought, than to ſpeak of ſtones, trees, fields, and rivers, as if they were living creatures, and to attribute to them thought and ſenſation, action and affection? This would appear to be nothing more than childiſh conceit which no perſon of taſte could reliſh. The caſe, however, is very different. No ſuch ridiculous effect is produced by perſonification, when judiciouſly managed: on the contrary, it is found to be natural and agreeable. Nor is any very uncommon degree of paſſion required to make us reliſh it. Into every ſpecies of poetry it eaſily gains admiſſion: it is by no means excluded from proſe; and even in common converſation it not unfrequently finds a place. Thus we do not heſitate to ſpeak of a *furious* dart, a *deceitful* diſeaſe, the *thirſty* ground, the *angry* ocean. The uſe of ſuch expreſſions ſhews the facility with which the mind can accommodate the properties of living creatures to things that are inanimate, or to its own abſtract ideas.

That our actions are too much influenced by paſſion, is an acknowledged truth; but it is no leſs certain, that paſſion alſo poſſeſſes conſiderable influence over our perceptions, opinions, and belief. When by any animating paſſion, whether pleaſant or painful, an impulſe is given to the imagination, we are in that condition diſpoſed to uſe every ſort of figurative expreſſion. Now theſe figures are generally founded upon a momentary belief in ſome circumſtance which calm and unclouded reaſon would repreſent in quite a different point of view. Over the body of his ſlaughtered friend, Anthony thus vents his paſſion:

O pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with theſe butchers.
Thou art the ruins of the nobleſt man
That ever lived in the tide of times. *Shakespeare.*

Here the ſpeaker muſt have been impreſſed with ſome ſort of notion, that the body of Cæſar was liſtening to him; without which theſe expreſſions would be regarded as fooliſh and abſurd.

In the following example, Almeria calls upon the earth to protect her from the unkindneſs of her father.

O Earth, behold, I kneel upon thy boſom,
And bend my flowing eyes to ſtream upon
Thy face, imploring thee that thou wilt yield;
Open thy bowels of compaſſion, take
Into thy womb the laſt and moſt forlorn
Of all thy race. Hear me, thou common parent
I have no parent elſe. Be thou a mother,
And ſtep between me and the curſe of him
Who was—who was, but is no more a father;
But brands my innocence with horrid crimes;
And, for the tender names of child and daughter,
Now calls me murderer and parricide. *Congreve.*

Plaintive paſſions are extremely ſolicitous for vent; and a ſoliloquy commonly anſwers this purpoſe. But when ſuch a paſſion becomes exceſſive, it cannot be gratified except by ſympathy from others; and if denied that conſolation, it will convert even things inanimate into ſympathiſing beings.

Ye woods and wilds, whoſe melancholy gloom
Accords with my ſoul's ſadneſs, and draws forth

The tear of ſorrow from my burſting heart,
Farewel a while. *Home.*

Here lady Randolph muſt have imagined, that the objects which ſhe addreſſed, were in ſome meaſure conſcious of emotions ſympathetic with her own. That ſuch perſonification is derived from nature, will not admit of the leaſt doubt, when we conſider, that it is to be found in the poetical productions of the darkeſt ages, and moſt remote countries. I ſhall give a ſingle inſtance:

The battle is over, ſaid the king, and I behold the blood of my friends. Sad is the heath of Lena, and mournful the oaks of Cromla. *Oſſian.*

Terror is another ſource of this figure: it is communicated in thought to every ſurrounding object, even to thoſe which are inanimate:

Go, view the ſettling ſea. The ſtormy wind is laid; but the billows ſtill tumble on the deep, and ſeem to fear the blaſt. *Oſſian.*

We naturally communicate our joy in the ſame manner:

As when to them who ſail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are paſt
Mozambic, off at ſea north-eaſt winds blow
Sabean odour from the ſpicy ſhore
Of Araby the bleſt; with ſuch delay
Well pleaſ'd they ſlack their courſe, and many a league
Chear'd with the grateful ſmell old Ocean ſmiles.
Milton.

In all the above examples, the perſonification, if I miſtake not, is ſo complete as to afford an actual though momentary conviction, that the objects introduced are poſſeſſed of life and intelligence. But it is evident from numberleſs inſtances, that the perſonification is not always ſo perfect. It is often employed in deſcriptive poetry, without being intended to produce the ſame conviction:

Come gentle Spring! etherial mildneſs, come,
And from the boſom of yon dropping cloud,
While muſic wakes around, veil'd in a ſhower
Of ſhadowing roſes, on our plains deſcend. *Thomſon.*

Now Summer with her wanton court is gone
To revel on the ſouth ſide of the world,
And flaunt and frolic out the livelong day;
While winter riſing pale from northern ſeas
Shakes from his hoary locks the drizzling rheum.
Armſtrong.

Lo! how the Years to come, a numerous and well fitted quire,
All hand in hand do decently advance,
And to my ſong with ſmooth and equal meaſures dance. *Cowley.*

But look, the morn, in ruſſet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eaſtward hill.
Shakeſpeare.

If aught of oaten ſtop or paſt'ral ſong
May hope, chaſte Eve! to ſooth thy modeſt ear,
Like thy own ſolemn ſprings,
Thy ſprings and dying gales. *Collins.*

Night, ſable goddeſs! from her ebon throne,
In rayleſs majeſty, now ſtretches forth
Her leaden ſceptre o'er a ſlumb'ring world. *Young.*

In theſe inſtances, it may be preſumed, that the perſonification, either with the poet or his readers, does not amount to any conviction that the objects are endowed with intelligence. The ſeaſons, the year, morning, evening, and night, are not here underſtood to be ſenſible beings. The perſonification muſt therefore be referred to the imagination: the inanimate object is figured to be poſſeſſed of conſciouſneſs; but we are not even impreſſed with a momentary conviction that it is ſo in reality. Ideas or fictions of imagination have the power of exciting emotions in the mind: and when any inanimate object is, in imagination, ſuppoſed to be an intelligent being, it aſſumes an appearance of greater importance than when an idea is formed of it according to truth. In this caſe, however, the elevation is far from being equal to what it is when the perſonification amounts to actual conviction. Thus perſonification is of two kinds. The firſt, or nobler kind, may be termed paſſionate perſonification; the other, or more humble, may be termed deſcriptive perſonification. Perſonification in mere deſcription is ſeldom or never carried the length of conviction.

This figure admits of three different degrees; which it is neceſſary to remark and diſtinguiſh, in order to determine the propriety of its uſe. The firſt is when ſome of the properties or qualities of living creatures are aſcribed to inanimate objects; the ſecond, when thoſe inanimate objects are introduced as acting like living creatures; and the third, when they are repreſented, either as ſpeaking to us, or as liſtening when we addreſs them.

When this figure is uſed in its loweſt degree, it raiſes the ſtyle ſo little, that it may be admitted into the moſt humble diſcourſe. Such expreſſions as *furious* dart, *thirſty* ground, raiſe ſo ſlight a conviction of ſenſibility, if they raiſe any at all, that it may ſeem doubtful whether they ought not to be referred to ſome other figure. Still, however, ſuch epithets are found to have a more powerful effect than thoſe which are properly and literally applicable to the objects. This effect may be explained in the following manner. In the expreſſion *angry ocean*, do we not tacitly compare the ocean in a ſtorm to a man in wrath? It is by this tacit compariſon that the expreſſion acquires a force or elevation above what is found in an epithet proper to the object. This compariſon, though only tacit, ſeems to exclude perſonification: by the very nature of compariſon, the objects compared are kept diſtinct, and the native appearance of each is preſerved.

All that can be ſaid concerning the ſubject, is that, with regard to ſuch inſtances, it muſt depend upon the reader, whether they may be examples of perſonification, or merely of what Kames denominates a figure of ſpeech.* A ſprightly imagination will advance them to the former claſs; while with a plain reader, they will remain in the latter.

The ſecond degree of this figure is, when inanimate objects are introduced acting like living creatures. Here we riſe a ſtep higher, and the perſonification becomes ſenſible. The ſtrength of the figure depends upon the nature of the action which we attribute to theſe inanimate objects, and the particularity with which it is deſcribed.

Go to your Natural Religion; lay before her Mahomet, and his diſciples, arrayed in armour and blood, riding in triumph over the ſpoils of thouſands who fell by his victori-

* Kames's Elements of Criticiſm, chap. xx. ſect. vii.

ous sword. Shew her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in this scene, carry her into his retirement; shew her the prophet's chamber; his concubines and his wives; and let her hear him allege revelation, and a divine commission, to justify his adultery and lust. When she is tired with this prospect, then shew her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men. Let her see him in his most retired privacies; let her follow him to the Mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God. Carry her to his table, and view his poor fare; and hear his heavenly discourse. Let her attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his cross; let her view him in the agony of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors; *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* When Natural Religion has thus viewed both, ask her, Which is the Prophet of God? But her answer we have already had, when she saw part of this scene, through the eyes of the centurion, who attended at the cross. By him she spoke, and said, *Truly this man was the Son of God.* *Sherlock's Sermons.*

This is more than elegant; it is truly sublime. The whole passage is animated, and the figure rises at the conclusion, when Natural Religion, who before was only a spectator, is introduced as speaking by the centurion's voice. This is an instance of personification, carried as far as prose, even in its highest elevation, will admit.

The genius of our language affords us a material advantage in the use of this figure. All substantive nouns, except the proper names of creatures, male or female, are destitute of gender. By simply bestowing the masculine or feminine gender upon inanimate objects, we introduce personification. "When we give them sex, by making them masculine or feminine, they are thenceforth personified; are a kind of intelligent beings, and become, as such, the proper ornament either of Rhetoric or Poetry."

"Thus Milton:

The Thunder
Wing'd with red light'ning and impetuous rage,
Perhaps has spent *his* shafts. *P. Lost. I.* 174.

"The poet having juſt before called the Hail and Thunder, God's Miniſters of Vengeance, and ſo perſonified them, had he afterwards ſaid *its* ſhafts for *his* ſhafts, would have deſtroyed his own image, and approached withal ſo much nearer to proſe.

"The following paſſage is from the ſame poem:

Should intermitted Vengeance arm again
His red right hand. *P. L. II.* 173.

"In this place *his* hand is clearly preferable either to *hers* or *its*, by immediately referring us to God himſelf the Avenger.

"I ſhall only add one inſtance more:

At his command the uprooted Hills retir'd
Each to *his* place: they heard his voice and went
Obſequious: Heaven *his* wonted face renew'd,
And with freſh flowrets Hill and Valley ſmil'd.
P. L. VI.

"Here all things are perſonified; the hills *hear*, the vallies *ſmile*, and the *face* of Heaven is renewed. Suppoſe then the poet had been neceſſitated by the laws of his language to have ſaid—Each Hill retir'd to *its* place—Heaven renewed *its* wonted face—how proſaic and lifeleſs would theſe neuters have appeared; how detrimental to the *prosopopœia*, which he was aiming to eſtabliſh? in all this therefore he was happy, that the language in which he wrote, impoſed no ſuch neceſſity; and he was too wiſe a writer, to impoſe it on himſelf."*

Perſonifications of this kind is extremely frequent in poetry, of which indeed they are the very life and ſoul. We expect to find every thing animated in the deſcriptions of a poet who poſſeſſes a lively fancy. Homer is remarkable for the uſe of this figure. War, peace, darts, ſpears, towns, rivers, every thing, in ſhort, is alive in his writing. The ſame is the caſe with Milton and Shakeſpeare. One of the greateſt pleaſures we receive from poetry, is, to find ourſelves always in the midſt of our fellows; and to ſee every thing feeling and acting like ourſelves. This is perhaps the principal charm of the figurative ſtyle, that it introduces us into

* Harris's Hermes, book I. chap. IV.

ſociety with all nature, and intereſts us even in inanimate objects, by forming a connection between them and us, through that ſenſibility which it aſcribes to them.

It yet remains to treat of the higheſt degree of this figure. This conſiſts in introducing inanimate objects not only as feeling and acting, but alſo as ſpeaking and liſtening. Perſonification in this degree, though on ſeveral occaſions far from being unnatural, is very difficult in the management. It is the boldeſt of all rhetorical figures: it is the ſtyle of ſtrong paſſion only; and therefore ought never to be attempted, unleſs when the mind is conſiderably heated and agitated. The introduction of ſome object inanimate, acting as if it had life, can be reliſhed by the mind in the midſt of cool deſcription. But we muſt be in a ſtate of conſiderable emotion, before we can ſo far realiſe the perſonification of an inſenſible object, as to conceive it liſtening to what we ſay, or returning an anſwer to our addreſs. All ſtrong paſſions, however, have a tendency to produce this figure; not only love, anger, and indignation, but even thoſe which are ſeemingly more depreſſing, ſuch as grief, remorſe, and melancholy.

Having thus treated of the nature of perſonification, and of its different degrees, it remains to ſhew in what caſes it may be introduced with propriety, when it is ſuitable, when unſuitable.

I. After a paſſionate perſonification is properly introduced, it ought to be confined to its diſtinct province, that of gratifying ſome predominant paſſion. Every ſentiment which is unconnected with this deſign, ought to be rejected. The paſſion of love, for example, in a plaintive tone, may beſtow a momentary life upon woods and rocks, to make them witneſſes of the lover's conſtancy or diſtreſs: but no paſſion will ſupport a conviction ſo far ſtretched, as that theſe woods and rocks ſhould report that conſtancy or diſtreſs to others. An eminent poet, however, has fallen into an error of this kind.

II. Deſcriptive perſonification cannot be too cautiouſly uſed. A perſonage in tragedy, agitated by ſome ſtrong paſſion, is inſpired with warm and lofty ſentiments; and the reader, catching fire by ſympathy, reliſhes the boldeſt perſonifications: but a writer, even in the moſt lively deſcrip-

tion, ought to content himſelf with ſuch figures of this kind as agree with the tone of mind inſpired by the deſcription. Nor is the loweſt degree of perſonification to be admitted upon every occaſion; for in plain narrative, the mind, ſerious and ſedate, rejects the figure altogether.

III. If extraordinary marks of reſpect to a perſon of low condition be ridiculous, not leſs ſo is the perſonification of a low ſubject. This rule chiefly regards deſcriptive perſonification; for a ſubject can hardly be regarded as mean or low, that is the cauſe of a violent paſſion: in that circumſtance, at leaſt, it muſt be of importance. No poſitive rules, however, can be aſſigned with regard to what objects ſhould be ſelected, and what avoided: the ultimate appeal muſt always lye to the deciſion of taſte. A poet of ſuperior genius, poſſeſſing the power of inflaming the mind, may take liberties which would be dangerous in others. Homer does not appear extravagant in animating his darts and arrows; nor Thompſon in animating the ſeaſons, the winds, the rains, the dews. The latter of theſe poets even ventures to animate the diamond; and this he does with great propriety. But there are objects familiar and baſe, to which perſonification cannot deſcend. In a compoſed ſtate of mind, to animate a lump of matter even in the moſt rapid flight of fancy, degenerates into burleſque:

How now? what noiſe? that ſpirit's poſſeſſed with haſte,
That wounds the unreſiſting poſtern with theſe ſtrokes.
Shakespeare.

This produces a very ridiculous effect.

IV. Deſcriptive, ſtill more than paſſionate perſonification, ought to be kept within the bounds of moderation. Upon certain occaſions, a reader can even without paſſion imagine the winds to be animated: but ſtill the winds are the ſubject; and any action aſcribed to them contrary to their uſual operation, appearing unnatural, ſeldom fails to vaniſh the illuſion altogether. The reader's imagination too far ſtrained, refuſes its aid; and the deſcription becomes obſcure, inſtead of being more lively and luminous.

This figure requires to be uſed with greater moderation in proſe than in poetry: for, in proſe, the ſame aſſiſtances

cannot be obtained for raiſing paſſion to its proper height by the force of numbers and the glow of ſtyle. Yet from this ſpecies of compoſition, addreſſes to objects inanimate, are by no means excluded: they have their place in the loftier kind of oratory. A public ſpeaker, may on ſome occaſions very properly addreſs religion or virtue; or his country; or ſome city or province, which has ſuffered, perhaps, great calamities, or been the ſcene of ſome memorable event. But it ought to be remembered, that, as ſuch addreſſes are among the higheſt efforts of eloquence, they ſhould never be attempted, unleſs by perſons of more than ordinary genius. Of all frigid things, the moſt frigid are the aukward and unſeaſonable attempts ſometimes made towards ſuch kinds of perſonification, eſpecially if they be long continued. We perceive the writer labouring to imitate the language of ſome paſſion which he neither feels himſelf, nor is capable of exciting in others.

CHAP. XIII.

OF APOSTROPHE.

APOSTROPHE is a figure nearly allied to perſonification. It conſiſts in beſtowing an ideal preſence upon real perſons, either dead or abſent. We addreſs them as if they ſtood before us liſtening to the overflowing of our paſſion:

Strike the harp in praiſe of Bragela, whom I left in the iſle of miſt, the ſpouſe of my love. Doſt thou raiſe thy fair face from the rock to find the ſails of Cuchullin? The ſea is rolling far diſtant, and its white foam ſhall deceive thee for my ſails. Retire, for it is night, my love, and the dark winds ſigh in thy hair. Retire to the hall of my feaſts, and think of the times that are paſt; for I will not return till the ſtorm of war is gone. *Oſſian.*

Weep on the rocks of roaring winds, O maid of Iniſtore; bend thy fair head over the waves, thou fairer than the ghoſt of the hills, when it moves in a ſun-beam at noon,

over the silence of Morven! He is fallen! Thy youth is low; pale beneath the sword of Cuchullin! *Ossian.*

In these examples, an address is made to persons that are absent: but addresses are also made to the dead:

Farewell, too little, and too lately known,
Whom I began to think and call my own;
For sure our souls were near ally'd, and thine
Cast in the same poetic mould with mine, *Dryden.*

Once on thy friends look down, lamented shade,
And view the honours to thy ashes paid;
Some thy lov'd dust in Parian stones enshrine,
Others immortal epitaphs design,
With wit, and strength, that only yield to thine.
Smith.

O thou! with whom my heart was wont to share,
From Reason's dawn each pleasure and each care;
With whom, alas! I fondly hop'd to know
The humble walks of happiness below;
If thy blest nature now unites above
An angel's pity with a brother's love,
Still o'er my life preserve thy mild controul,
Correct my views, and elevate my soul. *Rogers.*

Art thou, my Gregory, forever fled?
And am I left to unavailing woe?
When fortune's storms assail this weary head,
Where cares long since has shed untimely snow,
Ah, now for comfort whither shall I go?
No more thy soothing voice my anguish cheers;
Thy placid eyes with smiles no longer glow,
My hopes to cherish and allay my fears. *Beattie.*

Phillips! whose touch harmonious could remove
The pangs of guilty pow'r, and hapless love,
Rest here, distrest by poverty no more,
Find here that calm thou gav'st so oft before;
Sleep undisturbed within this peaceful shrine,
Till angels wake thee with a note like thine.
Johnson.

In all the foregoing examples, the perſons addreſſed are ſuppoſed to be either preſent, or at leaſt to liſten to the ſpeakers.

It requires a leſs violent effort of imagination to ſuppoſe perſons preſent, who are abſent or dead, than to animate inſenſible beings and direct our diſcourſe to them. This figure may therefore be introduced where perſonification in its higheſt degree would be improper. It muſt not however be employed except when the mind is in ſome meaſure under the dominion of paſſion.

CHAP. XIV.

OF HYPERBOLE.

THE Hyperbole conſiſts in magnifying or diminiſhing an object beyond reality. This figure is in common uſe both among the learned and unlearned. The human mind does not reſt ſatisfied with the ſimple truth, but has a ſtrong propenſity to add or diminiſh.* An object either very little or very great in its kind, ſtrikes us with ſurpriſe; and this emotion forces upon the mind a momentary conviction that the object is greater or leſs than it is actually found to be. Hence the Hyperbole, which expreſſes that momentary conviction. A writer taking advantage of this natural deluſion, enriches his deſcription by the uſe of hyperboles: and the reader, even in his cooleſt moments, reliſhes that figure: he is ſenſible, that it is the operation of nature upon a warm fancy.

Even in common converſation, hyperbolical expreſſions very frequently occur; *as ſwift as the wind, as white as ſnow*, and the like: and our ordinary forms of compliment are almoſt all of them extravagant hyperboles. Yet theſe exaggerated expreſſions ſcarcely ſtrike us as hyperbolical. In an inſtant we make the proper abatement, and know how to form a juſt eſtimate. But when there is ſomething ſtriking and unuſual in the form of an hyperbolical expreſ-

* Quinctilian, de Inſtitut, Orator, lib. viii. chap. vi.

ſion, it is exalted into a figure of ſpeech which draws our attention.

It cannot have eſcaped obſervation, that a writer is generally more ſucceſsful in magnifying by a hyperbole than in diminiſhing. A minute object contracts the mind, and fetters its powers; whereas a grand object dilates and inflames it.

The following quotations will examplify the manner in which this figure is uſed:

For all the land which thou ſeeſt, to thee will I give it, and to thy ſeed forever. And I will make thy ſeed as the duſt of the earth: ſo that if a man can number the duſt of the earth, then ſhall thy ſeed alſo be numbered. *Genesis.*

Me miſerable! which way ſhall I fly
Infinite wrath, and infinite deſpair?
Which way I fly is Hell, myſelf am Hell;
And in the loweſt deep a lower deep
Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,
To which the Hell I ſuffer ſeems a Heaven. *Milton.*

Swift Camilla ſcours the plain,
Flies o'er th' unbending corn, and ſkims along the main.
Pope.

Longinus quotes from ſome comic poet, the following ludicrous inſtance of diminiſhing hyperbole: "He was owner of a piece of ground not larger than a Lacedemonian letter."*

I. A hyperbole ſhould never be introduced in the deſcription of any thing ordinary or familiar. In ſuch a caſe, it is altogether unnatural:

I ſaw him beat the ſurges under him,
And ride upon their backs; he trode the water;
Whoſe enmity he flung aſide, and breaſted
The ſurge moſt ſwoln that met him: his bold head
'Bove the contentious waves he kept, and oar'd
Himſelf with his good arms in luſty ſtrokes
To th' ſhore, that o'er his wave-borne baſis bow'd,
As ſtooping to receive him. *Shakespeare.*

* Longini de Sublimitate, § xxxviii.

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II. A hyperbole cannot be introduced with propriety, until the mind of the reader is duly prepared. A figure of this kind, placed at the beginning of a work is improper.

How far a hyperbole may be carried, and what is the proper meaſure and boundary of it, cannot be aſcertained by any preciſe rule. Good ſenſe and a cultivated taſte muſt determine the point, beyond which it will become extravagant. Longinus compares a hyperbole carried too far, to a bow-ſtring which relaxes by overſtraining, and produces an effect oppoſite to what is intended.*

In ſingle oppoſition hand to hand,
He did confound the beſt part of an hour
In changing hardiment with great Glendower.
Three times they breath'd, and three times did they drink,
Upon agreement, of ſwift Severn's flood;
Who then affrighted with their bloody looks,
Ran fearfully among the trembling reeds,
And hid his criſp head in the hollow bank,
Blood-ſtained with theſe valiant combatants.
Shakespeare.

England ne'er had a king until his time:
Virtue he had, deſerving to command:
His brandiſh'd ſword did blind men with its beams:
His arms ſpread wider than a dragon's wings:
His ſparkling eyes, replete with awful fire,
More dazzled, and drove back his enemies,
Than mid-day ſun fierce bent againſt their faces.
Shakespeare.

I found her on the floor
In all the ſtorm of grief, yet beautiful;
Pouring forth tears at ſuch a laviſh rate,
That were the world on fire, they might have drown'd
The wrath of Heaven, and quench'd the mighty ruin.
Lee.

With regard to the latter of theſe inſtances the perſon herſelf who was under the diſtracting agitations of grief might be permitted to hyperbolize in this manner; but the perſon deſcribing her cannot be allowed an equal liberty.

* Longinus ut ſupra.

The one is supposed to utter the sentiments of passion; the other speaks only the language of description, which, according to the dictates of nature, is always in a lower tone. This is a distinction which, however obvious, has not been attended to by many writers.

III. A hyperbole, after it is introduced with every advantage, ought to be comprehended in as few words as possible. As it cannot be relished but in the confusion and swelling of the mind; a leisurely view dissolves the charm, and discovers it to be either extravagant or ridiculous.

CHAP. XV.

OF COMPARISON.

THE situation in which man is placed, requires some acquaintance with the nature, power, and qualities of those objects which surround him. For acquiring a branch of knowledge so essential to our happiness and preservation, motives of interest and of reason are not alone sufficient: nature hath providentially superadded curiosity, a vigorous principle which is never at rest. This principle strongly attaches us to those objects which have the recommendation of novelty: it incites us to compare things together, for the purpose of discovering their differences and resemblances.

Resemblance between objects of the same kind, and dissimilitude between those of different kinds, are too obvious and familiar to gratify our curiosity in any degree: its gratification lies in discovering differences where resemblance prevails, and resemblances where difference prevails. Thus a difference in individuals of the same kind of plants or animals is deemed a discovery; while the many particulars in which they agree are neglected: and in different kinds, any resemblance is eagerly remarked, without attending to the many particulars in which they differ.

Objects of different senses cannot often be properly compared together; for they are totally separated from each other, and have no circumstance in common to admit either resem-

blance or contraſt. Objects of hearing may be compared together, as alſo thoſe of taſte, of ſmell, and of touch: but objects of ſight are the principal ſource of compariſon; becauſe, in ſpeaking or writing, things can only be compared in idea, and the ideas of ſight are more diſtinct and lively than thoſe of any other ſenſe.

It muſt however be obſerved, that two objects are ſometimes happily compared together, though, ſtrictly ſpeaking, they reſemble each other in nothing. Though they are diſſimilar, they yet agree in the effects which they produce upon the mind; they raiſe a train of ſimilar or concordant ideas; ſo that the remembrance of the one ſerves to ſtrengthen the impreſſion made by the other.

The muſic of Carryl was, like the memory of joys that are paſt, pleaſant and mournful to the ſoul. *Oſſian.*

This ſeems happy and delicate: yet ſurely no kind of muſic bears any immediate reſemblance to a feeling of the mind. Had it been compared to the voice of the nightingale, or the murmur of the ſtream, as it would have been by ſome ordinary poet, the likeneſs would have been more diſtinct; but, by founding his ſimile upon the effect which Carryl's muſic produced, the poet, while he conveys a very tender image, gives us, at the ſame time, a much ſtronger impreſſion of the nature and ſtrain of that muſic.

The following ſmiles are of the ſame deſcription:

Behold, how good and how pleaſant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard; that went down to the ſkirts of his garments. *Pſalms.*

Delightful is thy preſence, O Fingal! it is like the ſun of Cromla, when the hunter mourns his abſence for a ſeaſon, and ſees him between the clouds. *Oſſian.*

Often, like the evening-ſun, comes the memory of former times on my ſoul. *Oſſian.*

When a nation emerging from barbarity begins to cultivate the fine arts, the beauties of language cannot long lie concealed: but when diſcovered, they are generally, by the force of novelty, carried beyond all bounds of moderation. Thus, in the firſt poetical efforts of every nation, we find me-

taphors and ſimiles founded on the ſlighteſt and moſt diſtant reſemblances. Theſe, loſing their grace with their novelty, wear gradually out of repute; and at length, on the improvement of taſte, no metaphor or ſimile, except it be of a ſtriking kind, is admitted into any polite compoſition.

It is ſcarcely poſſible to diſcover the reſemblances upon which the following compariſons are founded:

Behold, thou art my fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou haſt dove's eyes within thy locks; thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from mount Gilead. Thy teeth are like a flock of ſheep that are even ſhorn, which come up from the waſhing; whereof every one bears twins, and none is barren among them. Thy lips are as a thread of ſcarlet, and thy ſpeech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks. Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thouſand bucklers, all ſhields of mighty men. Thy two breaſts are like two young roes that are twins: thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fiſh-pools in Heſhbon by the gate of Beth-rabbim, thy noſe is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damaſcus. *Song of Solomon.*

Thou art like ſnow on the heath; thy hair like the miſt of Cromla, when it curls on the rocks and ſhines to the beam of the weſt: thy breaſts are like two ſmooth rocks ſeen from Branno of the ſtreams: thy arms like two white pillars in the hall of the mighty Fingal. *Oſſian.*

Between an exemplification and a ſimile a difference is to be pointed out. A ſimile is founded upon the diſcovery of likeneſs between two actions, in their general nature diſſimilar, or of cauſes terminating by different operations in ſome reſemblance of effect. But the mention of another like conſequence from a like cauſe, or of a like performance by a like agency, is not a ſimile, but an exemplification. It is not a ſimile to ſay, that the Thames waters fields, as the Po waters fields; or that as Hector vomits flames in Iceland, ſo Ætna vomits flames in Sicily. When Horace ſays of Pindar, that he pours his violence and rapidity of verſe, as a river ſwoln with rain ruſhes from the mountain; or of himſelf, that his genius wanders in queſt of poetical decorations, as the bee wanders in queſt of honey; he, in either caſe, produces a ſimile: the mind is impreſſed with the reſemblance of things general,

ly unlike, as unlike as intellect and body. But if Pindar had been described as writing with the copiousness and grandeur of Homer, or Horace had told us, that he reviewed and finished his own poetry with the same care as Isocrates polished his orations, instead of similitude, he would have exhibited almost identity; he would have given the same portraits with different names. When Addison represents the English as gaining a fortified pass, by repetition of attack and perseverance of resolution, their obstinacy of courage, and vigour of onset is well illustrated by the sea that breaks, with incessant battery, the dikes of Holland. This is a simile: but when the same author, after having celebrated the beauty of Marlborough's person, tells us that "Achilles thus was formed with every grace," he does not employ a simile but a mere exemplification. A simile may be compared to two lines converging at a point; and it is more excellent as the lines approach from greater distance: an exemplification may be considered as two parallel lines, which run on together without approximation, never far separated, and never joined.*

When comparisons are addressed to the understanding, their purpose is to instruct; when to the heart, to please. The latter of these purposes is accomplished by various means: first, by suggesting some unusual resemblance or contrast; secondly, by setting an object in the strongest light; thirdly, by associating an object with others that are agreeable; fourthly, by elevating an object; and, fifthly, by depressing it. Of the two following comparisons, the former seems intended to instruct, the latter to please:

As wax would not be adequate to the purpose of signature, if it had not the power to retain as well as to receive the impression, the same holds of the soul with respect to sense and imagination. Sense is its receptive power; imagination its retentive. Had it sense without imagination, it would not be as wax, but as water, where, though all impressions be instantly made, yet as soon as they are made they are instantly lost. *Harris's Hermes.*

Upon Hamet the death of his father produced a very different effect: as soon as he heard it, his lips trembled and

* Johnson's Life of Addison.

his countenance grew pale; he stood motionless a moment, like a pilgrim transfixed by lightning in the desert.

Hawkesworth's Almoran and Hamet.

One of the means by which comparisons afford us pleasure, is the suggestion of some unusual resemblance or contrast. It will be necessary to illustrate by particular instances:

Thus they their doubtful consultations dark
Ended, rejoicing in their matchless chief:
As when from mountain-tops the dusky clouds
Ascending, while the North-wind sleeps, o'erspread
Heav'n's chearful face, the lowring element
Scowls o'er the darken'd lanscape, snow, and showers;
If chance the radiant sun with farewell sweet
Extends his ev'ning beam, the fields revive,
The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings. *Milton.*

Sweet are the uses of Adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in her head. *Shakespeare.*

See how the Morning opes her golden gates,
And takes her farewell of the glorious Sun;
How well resembles it the prime of youth,
Trimm'd like a yonker prancing to his love!

Shakespeare.

As the bright stars, and milky way,
Shew'd by the night, are hid by day:
So we in that accomplish'd mind,
Help'd by the night new graces find,
Which, by the splendour of her view
Dazzled before, we never knew. *Waller.*

None of these similes, as they appear to me, tend to illustrate the principal subject: and therefore the chief pleasure they afford, must arise from suggesting resemblances that are not obvious.

The next effect of a comparison, in the order mentioned, is to place an object in a conspicuous point of view:

The goddess appears; for Poverty ever comes at the call: but, alas! he finds her by no means the charming figure books and his own imagination had painted. As when an

eastern bride, whom her friends and relations had long described as a model of perfection, pays her first visit, the longing bridegroom lifts the veil to see a face he had never seen before; but, instead of a countenance blazing with beauty like the sun, he beholds deformity shooting icicles to his heart; such appears Poverty to her new entertainer.

Goldsmith's Essays.

There is a joy in grief when peace dwells with the sorrowful. But they are wasted with mourning, O daughter of Toscar, and their days are few. They fall away like the flower on which the sun looks in his strength, after the mildew has passed over it, and its head is heavy with the drops of night. *Ossian.*

Why did not I pass away in secret, like the flower of the rock that lifts its fair head unseen, and strows its withered leaves on the blast? *Ossian.*

She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i' th' bud,
Feed on her damask cheek: she pin'd in thought;
And with a green and yellow melancholy,
She sat like Patience on a monument,
Smiling at Grief. *Shakspeare.*

Yet sadly it is sung, that she in shades,
Mildly as morning doves, love's sorrow felt;
Whilst in her secret tears, her freshness fades,
As roses silently in lymbecks melt. *Davenant.*

As streams which with their winding banks do play,
Stopp'd by their creeks, run softly through the plain;
So in th' ear's labyrinth the voice doth stray,
And doth with easy motion touch the brain.

Davies.

Fir'd at first sight with what the Muse imparts,
In fearless youth we tempt the height of arts,
While from the bounded level of our mind
Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind;
But more advanc'd, behold, with strange surprise,
New distant scenes of endless science rise!
So pleas'd at first the tow'ring Alps we try,
Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky!

Th' eternal ſnows appear already paſt,
And the firſt clouds and mountains ſeem the laſt;
But, theſe attain'd, we tremble to ſurvey
The growing labours of the lengthen'd way:
Th' increaſing proſpect tires our wand'ring eyes;
Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps ariſe! *Pope.*

This laſt compariſon, in the opinion of Dr. Johnſon, is perhaps the beſt that Engliſh poetry can ſhew.*

The long-demurring maid,
Whoſe lonely unappropriated ſweets
Smil'd like yon knot of cowſlips on the cliff,
Not to be come at by the willing hand. *Blair.*

Few ſimiles, ſays Dr. Anderſon, can exceed this for elegant ſimplicity.† It likewiſe tends to place the principal ſubject in the ſtrongeſt light.

Another effect of compariſon is to embelliſh the principal ſubject by aſſociating it with others that are of an agreeable nature. Similes of this kind have alſo a ſeparate effect: they deverſify the narration by means of new images which are not ſtrictly neceſſary to the compariſon. They are ſhort epiſodes, which, without drawing us from the principal ſubject, afford delight by their beauty and variety.

He ſcarce had ceas'd, when the ſuperior fiend
Was moving towards the ſhore; his pond'rous ſhield,
Etherial temper, maſſy, large, and round,
Behind him caſt; the broad circumference
Hung on his ſhoulders like the moon, whoſe orb
Through optic glaſs the Tuſcan artiſt views
At ev'ning from the top of Feſole,
Or in Valdarno, to deſcry new lands,
Rivers or mountains, in her ſpotty globe. *Milton.*

With regard to ſimiles of this kind, it will readily occur to the reader, that, when a reſembling ſubject is once properly introduced, the mind is tranſitorily amuſed with the new object, and not diſſatisfied with the ſlight interruption. Thus, in fine weather, the momentary excurſions of a traveller for agreeable proſpects or elegant buildings, chear his

* Johnſon's Life of Pope. † Anderſon's Life of Blair.

mind, relieve him from the languor of uniformity, and without much lengthening his journey in reality, ſhorten it greatly in appearance. A writer may however happen to make too long a digreſſion: and it is thought by ſome, that Milton has more than once committed faults of this kind. The following quotation was probably intended as a burleſque of ſuch long and digreſſive ſimiles:

Not blacker tube, nor of a ſhorter ſize
Smokes Cambro-Briton (vers'd in pedigree,
Sprung from Cadwalador and Arthur, kings
Full famous in romantic tale) when he
O'er many a craggy hill and barren cliff,
Upon a cargo of fam'd Ceſtrian cheeſe,
High over-ſhadowing rides, with a deſign
To vend his wares, or at th' Arvonian mart,
Or Maridunum, or the ancient town
Yclep'd Brechinia, or where Vaga's ſtream
Encircles Ariconium, fruitful ſoil!
Whence flow nectareous wines, that well may vie
With Maſſic, Setin, or renown'd Falern. *Philips.*

Compariſons which tend to aggrandiſe or elevate an object, are next to be exemplified:

As ruſheth a foamy ſtream from the dark ſhady ſteep of Cromla, when thunder is rolling above, and dark brown night reſts on the hill: ſo fierce, ſo vaſt, ſo terrible, ruſh forward the ſons of Erin. The chief, like a whale of ocean followed by all its billows, pours valour forth as a ſtream, rolling its might along the ſhore. *Ossian.*

Like Autumn's dark ſtorms pouring from two echoing hills, towards each other approached the heroes: as two dark ſtreams from high rocks meet and roar on the plain, loud, rough, and dark in battle, meet Lochlin and Inisfail. *Ossian.*

Ten paces huge
He back recoil'd; the tenth on bended knee
His maſſy ſpear upſtaid: as if on earth
Winds under groud or waters forcing way,
Sidelong had puſh'd a mountain from his ſeat
Half-ſunk with all his pines. *Milton.*

Methinks, king Richard and myſelf ſhould meet
With no leſs terror than the elements
Of fire and water, when their thund'ring ſhock
At meeting tears the cloudy cheeks of heav'n.
Shakspeare.

In the laſt place, it was obſerved, that a compariſon may tend to leſſen or depreſs an object. This is accompliſhed by aſſimilating the principal ſubjects to any thing low or deſpicable.

The overthrown he rais'd, and, as a herd
Of goats or timorous flocks together throng'd,
Drove them before him thunder-ſtruck, purſu'd
With terrors and with furies to the bounds
And chryſtal wall of heav'n, which opening wide,
Roll'd inward, and a ſpacious gap diſclos'd
Into the waſteful deep: the monſt'rous ſight
Struck them with horror backward, but far worſe
Urg'd them behind; headlong themſelves they threw
Down from the verge of heav'n. *Milton.*

In the foregoing enumeration, I have not adverted to compariſons introduced for the ſake of placing ſome object in a ridiculous point of view. Of theſe I ſhall now add a few examples:

I do here walk before thee, like a ſow that hath overwhelmed all her litter but one. *Shakspeare.*

The moſt accompliſhed way of uſing books at preſent, is to ſerve them as ſome men do lords, learn their titles, and then brag of their acquaintance. *Swift's Tale of a Tub.*

Some think, that the ſpirit is apt to feed on the fleſh, like hungry wines upon raw beef.
Swift on the Mechan. Oper. of the Spirit.

Remark your commoneſt pretender to a light within, how dark, and gloomy and dirty he is without: as lanthorns, which the more light they bear in their bodies, caſt out ſo much the more ſoot, and ſmoke, and fuligenous matter to adhere to the ſides. *Ibid.*

Some again think, that when our earthly tabernacles are diſordered and deſolate, ſhaken and out of repair, the ſpirit

delights to dwell within them, as houſes are ſaid to be haunted when they are forſaken and gone to decay.* *Ibid.*

Here it may not be amiſs to add a few words upon the laudable practice of wearing quilted caps. Theſe, when moiſtened with ſweat, ſtop all perſpiration; and, by reverberating the heat, prevent the ſpirit from evaporating any way, but at the mouth; even as a ſkilful houſewife that covers her ſtill with a wet clout for the ſame reaſon, and finds the ſame effect. *Ibid.*

Seminaries of learning, as well as particular ſhops, are ſometimes frequented more on account of what they have been, than what they are: ſo many inſtances of this might be produced, that it ſeems to be a prevailing opinion in this iſland, that talents and genius, like cats, are more attached to particular walls and houſes than to the perſons who reſide within them. *Moore's Edward.*

I. A compariſon muſt not be inſtituted between objects which bear too near and obvious a reſemblance to each other. The great pleaſure of the act of comparing lies in diſcovering likeneſſes between things of different ſpecies, where we would not, at the firſt glance, expect a reſemblance. There is little art or ingenuity in pointing out reſemblances which cannot eſcape the moſt careleſs obſerver. When Milton compares Satan's appearance after his fall to that of the ſun ſuffering an eclipſe, and affrighting the nations with portentous darkneſs, we are ſtruck with the happineſs and the dignity of the ſimilitude. But, when he compares Eve's bower in Paradiſe to the arbour of Pomona, or Eve herſelf to a Dryad, or Wood-nymph, we receive little entertainment: every perſon ſees, that, in ſeveral reſpects, one arbour muſt of courſe reſemble another arbour, and one beautiful woman another beautiful woman.

II. As compariſons ought not to be founded on likeneſſes too obvious, ſtill leſs ought they to be founded on thoſe which

* This thought was perhaps ſuggeſted by the following couplet:

The ſoul's dark cottage, batter'd and decay'd,
Lets in new lights through chinks that Time had made.
Waller.

are too faint and remote. When differences or reſemblances are carried beyond certain bounds, they appear ſlight and trivial; and for that reaſon will not be reliſhed by perſons of taſte. The following inſtance will probably amuſe the reader: it is a quotation, not from a poet or orator, but from a grave author writing an inſtitute of law.

Our ſtudent ſhall obſerve, that the knowledge of the law is like a deep well, out of which each man draweth according to the ſtrength of his underſtanding. He that reacheth deepeſt, ſeeth the amiable and admirable ſecrets of the law, wherein I aſſure you the ſages of the law in former times have had the deepeſt reach. And as the bucket in the depth is eaſily drawn to the uppermoſt part of the water, (for *nullum elementum in ſuo propria loco eſt grave,*) but take it from the water, it cannot be drawn up but with a great difficulty, ſo, albeit beginnings of this ſtudy ſeem difficult, yet when the profeſſor of the law can dive into the depth, it is delightful, eaſy, and without any heavy burden, ſo long as he keep himſelf in his own proper element. *Coke upon Littleton.*

This mode of ſtretching compariſons is admirably expoſed in the following paſſage:

Fluellen. I think it is in Macedon where Alexander is porn: I tell you, Captain, if you look in the maps of the orld, I warrant that you ſall find, in the compariſons between Macedon and Monmouth, that the ſituations, look you, is both alike. There is a river in Macedon, there is alſo moreover a river in Monmouth: it is called Wye at Monmouth, but it is out of my prains what is the name of the other river; but it is all one, 'tis as like as my fingers to my fingers, and there is ſalmons in both. If you mark Alexander's life well, Harry of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well; for there is figures in all things. Alexander, God knows, and you know, in his rages, and his furies, and his wraths, and his cholers, and his moods, and his diſpleaſures, and his indignations, and alſo being a little intoxicates in his prains, did, in his ales and his angers, look you, kill his peſt friend Clytus.

Gower. Our king is not like him in that; he never kill'd any of his friends.

Fluellen. It is not well done, mark you now, to take the tales out of my mouth, ere it is made and finiſhed. I ſpeak but in figures, and compariſons of it: As Alexander killed his friend Clytus, being in his ales and his cups; ſo alſo Harry Monmouth, being in his right wits and his good judgments, turn'd away the fat knight with the great belly doublet; he was full of jeſts, and gypes, and knaveries, and mocks: I have forgot his name.

Gower. Sir John Falſtaff.

Fluellen. That is he: I tell you, there is good men porn at Monmouth. *Shakſpeare's Henry V.*

III. The object from which a compariſon is drawn, ſhould never be one of which but few people can form clear and diſtinct ideas. Compariſons are introduced into diſcourſe, for the ſake of throwing light on the ſubject. We muſt, therefore, be upon our guard, not to employ, as the ground of our ſimile, any object which is either obſcure or unknown. That which is uſed for the purpoſe of illuſtrating ſome other object, ought certainly to be more obvious and plain than the object intended to be illuſtrated. Compariſons, therefore, founded on philoſophical diſcoveries, or on any thing with which perſons of a certain profeſſion only are acquainted, do not produce their proper effect in any piece intended for the public at large. They ſhould be taken from thoſe illuſtrations, noted objects, which the majority of readers either have ſeen, or can ſtrongly conceive.

IV. A writer of delicacy will avoid drawing his compariſons from any image that is nauſeous, ugly or remarkably diſagreeable; for however ſtriking the reſemblance may be, the reader will be more ſtrongly affected with ſenſations of diſguſt, than with thoſe of pleaſure.

V. The ſtrongeſt objection which can be urged againſt a compariſon, is, that it conſiſts in words only, not in ſenſe. Such falſe coin is ſuitable in the burleſque; but it is far below the dignity of the epic, or of any ſerious compoſition. It is diſputed among critics, whether the following ſimile be not of this deſcription:

The noble ſiſter of Poplicola,
The Moon of Rome; chaſte as the icicle

That's curdled by the froſt from pureſt ſnow,
And hangs on Dian's temple. *Shakſpeare.*

"There is," ſaye Lord Kames, "evidently no reſemblance between an icicle, and a woman, chaſte or unchaſte: but chaſtity is cold in a metaphorical ſenſe; and this verbal reſemblance, in the hurry and glow of compoſition, has been thought a ſufficient foundation for the ſimile. Such phantom ſimiles are mere witticiſms, which ought to have no quarter, except where purpoſely introduced to provoke laughter."*

"This," ſays Goldſmith, "is no more than illuſtrating a quality of the mind, by comparing it with a ſenſible object. If there is no impropriety in ſaying ſuch a man is true as ſteel, firm as a rock, inflexible as an oak, unſteady as the ocean, or in deſcribing a diſpoſition cold as ice, or fickle as the wind; and theſe expreſſions are juſtified by practice; we ſhall hazard an aſſertion, that the compariſon of a chaſte woman to an icicle is proper and picturesque, as it obtains only in the circumſtances of cold and purity; but that the addition of its being curdled from the pureſt ſnow and hanging on the temple of Diana, the patroneſs of virginity, heightens the whole into a moſt beautiful ſimile."†

CHAP. XVI.

OF METAPHOR.

ONE of the moſt pleaſing exerciſes of the imagination is that in which ſhe is employed in comparing diſtinct ideas, and diſcovering their various reſemblances. There is no ſimple perception of the mind that is not capable of an infinite number of conſiderations in reference to other objects; and it is in the novelty and variety of theſe unexpected connections, that the richneſs of a writer's genius is

* Kames's Elements of Criticiſm, chap. xix.
† Goldſmith's Eſſays, vol. ii. eſſay xviii.

chiefly diſplayed. A vigorous and lively fancy does not tamely confine itſelf to the idea which lies before it, but looks beyond the immediate object of its contemplation, and obſerves how it ſtands in conformity with numberleſs others. It is the prerogative of the human mind thus to bring its images together, and compare the ſeveral circumſtances of ſimilitude which attend them. By theſe means eloquence exerciſes a kind of magic power; ſhe can raiſe innumerable beauties from the moſt barren ſubjects, and give the grace of novelty to the moſt common. The imagination is thus kept awake by the moſt agreeable motion, and entertained with a thouſand different views both of art and nature, which ſtill terminate at the principal object. For this reaſon, the metaphor is generally preferred to the ſimile, as a more pleaſing mode of illuſtration. In the former, the action of the mind is leſs languid, as it is employed at the very ſame inſtant in comparing the reſemblance with the idea which it attends: whereas in the latter, its operations are more ſlow, as it muſt firſt contemplate the principal object, and afterwards its correſponding image.

A metaphor differs from a ſimile in form only, not in ſubſtance: compariſon is the foundation of both. In a ſimile, the two ſubjects are kept diſtinct in the expreſſion, as well as in the thought; in a metaphor, they are kept diſtinct in the thought, but not in the expreſſion. A hero reſembles a lion; and upon that reſemblance many ſimiles have been founded by Homer and other poets. But let us call in the aid of the imagination, and figure the hero to be a lion, inſtead of only reſembling one: by that variation the ſimile is converted into a metaphor; which is carried on by deſcribing all the qualities of the lion which reſemble thoſe of the hero. The poet, by figuring his hero to be a lion, proceeds to deſcribe the lion in appearance; but in reality he is all the while deſcribing the hero; and his deſcription becomes peculiarly beautiful, by expreſſing the virtues and qualities of the hero in terms which properly belong not to him but to the lion.

When I ſay of ſome great miniſter, "that he upholds the ſtate like a pillar which ſupports the weight of a whole edifice," I evidently frame a compariſon: but when I ſay of the ſame miniſter "that he is a pillar of the ſtate," this is

not a comparison, but a metaphor. The comparison between the minister and a pillar is carried on in the mind; but is made without any of the words that denote comparison. The comparison is only insinuated, not expressed: the one object is supposed to be so like the other, that, without formally drawing the comparison, the name of the one may be substituted for that of the other.

A metaphor always implies comparison, and is, in that respect, a figure of thought: yet, as the words in which it is conveyed, are not taken literally, but changed from their proper to a figurative sense, the metaphor is commonly ranked among tropes, or figures of words. But provided the nature of it be well understood, it is of little importance whether we denominate it a trope or figure.

Although the word metaphor has been confined to the expression of resemblance between two objects, yet it is sometimes used in a looser and more extended sense: it denotes the application of a term in any figurative signification, whether the figure be founded on resemblance, or on some other relation, which two objects bear to each other. When gray hairs are put for old age, some writers would call this a metaphor, though in propriety of language it is only what rhetoricians term a metonymy; that is, the effect for the cause. Gray hairs are the effect of old age; but they do not bear any resemblance to it.

Aristotle, in his Poetics, uses the term metaphor in its extended sense, for any figurative meaning imposed upon a word; as a whole put for the part, or a part for the whole; a species for the genus, or a genus for the species. But it would be unjust to tax this most acute philosopher with any inaccuracy on this account; the minute subdivisions of tropes being totally unknown in his days.

Every writer ought to become a painter as far as the subject which he treats will permit him. Our thoughts are susceptible of different colourings: taken separately, each has a colour proper to itself; when combined, they lend each other mutual light and shade: and the art of the writer consists in delicately tracing their reflected tints.* Of all the figures of speech, none approaches so near to painting as

* Condillac, Traite de l'Art d'Ecrire, liv. ii. chap. vi.

metaphor. Its peculiar effect is to add light and ſtrength to deſcription; to make intellectual ideas, in ſome ſort, viſible to the eye, by giving them colour, and ſubſtance, and ſenſible qualities. To produce this effect, however, a very delicate hand is required; for, by the ſmalleſt degree of inaccuracy, we are in hazard of introducing confuſion, inſtead of promoting perſpicuity.

There is nothing in which a fine writer is ſo much diſtinguiſhed from one of an ordinary claſs, as in the conduct and application of this figure. He is at liberty to range through the whole compaſs of creation, and collect his images from every object which ſurrounds him. But though he may thus be amply furniſhed with materials, great judgment is required in ſelecting them: for, to render a metaphor perfect, it muſt be not only appoſite, but pleaſing; it muſt entertain, as well as enlighten.

I. Metaphors ſhould be ſuited to the nature of the ſubject of which we treat; neither too many, nor too gay, nor too elevated for it; that we may neither attempt to force the ſubject, by means of them, into a degree of elevation which is not conſiſtent with it; nor, on the other hand, allow it to ſink below its proper dignity. Theſe directions apply to figurative language in general, and ſhould always be kept in view. Some metaphors are allowed, nay beautiful, in poetry, which it would be abſurd to employ in proſe; ſome may be graceful in orations, which would be very improper in hiſtorical or philoſophical compoſition. Figures are the dreſs of our ſentiments. There is a natural congruity between the dreſs, and the character or rank of the perſon who wears it. The ſame is the caſe with regard to figures and ſentiments. The exceſſive or unſeaſonable employment of figures is mere foppery in writing. It gives a puerile air to compoſition; and diminiſhes the dignity of a ſubject rather than exalts it. For, as in real life, true dignity is founded on character, not on dreſs and parade, ſo the dignity of compoſition muſt ariſe from ſentiment and thought, not from ornament.

Figures and metaphors ſhould, upon no occaſion, be ſcattered with too profuſe a hand: and they ſhould never be incongruous with the train of our ſentiment. Nothing can be more unnatural, than for a writer to carry on a train of reaſoning, in the ſame kind of figurative language which he

would employ in deſcription. When he reaſons, we look only for perſpicuity; when he deſcribes, we expect embelliſhment; when he divides, or relates, we deſire plainneſs and ſimplicity. One of the greateſt ſecrets in compoſition is, to know when to be ſimple. This always lends a heightening to ornament, in its proper place. The judicious diſpoſition of ſhade makes the light and colouring ſtrike the more. He is truly eloquent, who can diſcourſe of humble ſubjects in a plain ſtyle, who can treat important ones with dignity, and ſpeak of things which are of a middle nature, in a temperate ſtrain. For, one who, upon no occaſion, can expreſs himſelf in a calm, orderly, diſtinct manner, when he begins to be on fire before his readers are prepared to kindle along with him, has the appearance of a madman raving among perſons who enjoy the uſe of their reaſon, or as a drunkard reeling in the midſt of ſober company.

The following quotation affords an inſtance of metaphorical language riſing to bombaſt:

The bill underwent a great number of alterations and amendments, which were not effected without violent conteſt: at length, however, it was floated through both houſes, on the tide of a great majority, and ſteered into the ſafe harbour of royal approbation. *Smollet's History of England.*

II. Metaphors ſhould never be drawn from objects which are mean or diſagreeable. Even when introduced to vilify and degrade any ſubject, an author ſhould ſtudy never to be naufeous in his alluſions. But in ſubjects of dignity, it is an unpardonable fault to employ metaphors which are mean and vulgar. All nature opens her ſtores to us, and admits us to gather from all ſenſible objects, whatever can illuſtrate intellectual or moral ideas. Not only the gay and ſplendid objects of ſenſe, but the grave, the terrifying, and even the gloomy and diſmal, may, on different occaſions, be introduced into figures with propriety. But we muſt always be cautious and ſelect in our choice.

In the following paſſage there occurs an unpardonable breach of this obvious rule:

Some bad poems carry their owners' marks about them, ſome brand or other on this buttock or that ear, that it is notorious who is the owner of the cattle.

Dryden, Dedication of Juvenal.

V. Different metaphors ought never to be confuſed together in the ſame ſentence. The uſe of mixed metaphor is one of the groſſeſt abuſes of this figure. Some writers begin ſentences with ſtorms and tempeſts, and cloſe them with fire and flames.

Though in their corrupt notions of divine worſhip, they are apt to multiply their gods, yet their earthly devotion is ſeldom paid to above one idol at a time, whoſe oar they pull with leſs murmuring and much more ſkill, than when they ſhare the lading, or even hold the helm.
Swift on the Contests and Dissentions in Athens and Rome.

The moſt injudicious writer could not have been betrayed into a more abſurd inconſiſtency of metaphor. The favourite of the people is firſt an idol; and in the very next clauſe, he is figured to be a veſſel. What connexion is there between worſhipping and rowing, and who ever heard before of pulling the oar of an idol?

Women were formed to temper mankind, not to ſet an edge upon their minds, and blow up in them thoſe paſſions which are apt to riſe of their own accord. *Addison, Spectator.*

The act of ſetting an edge, and the act of blowing up bear no analogy to each other.

The charm diſſolves apace,
And as the morning ſteals upon the night,
Melting the darkneſs, ſo their riſing ſenſes
Begin to chace the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reaſon. *Shakspeare.*

So many ill-concerted ideas are here brought together, that the mind can ſee nothing clearly;—the morning ſtealing upon the darkneſs, and at the ſame time melting it; the ſenſes of men chaſing fumes, and fumes that mantle.

As glorious
As is a winged meſſenger from heaven,
Unto the white upturned wondering eyes
Of mortals, that fall back to gaze on him,
When he beſtrides the lazy-pacing clouds,
And ſails upon the boſom of the air. *Shakspeare.*

Here the angel is repreſented at one inſtant as beſtriding the clouds and ſailing upon the air; and upon the boſom of the air too. This forms a picture too confuſed for the imagination to comprehend.

All then is full, poſſeſſing and poſſeſt,
No craving void left aching in the breaſt. *Pope.*

A void may, in a metaphorical ſenſe, be ſaid to crave; but can a void be ſaid to ache?

I bridle in my ſtruggling Muſe with pain,
That longs to launch into a bolder ſtrain. *Addiſon.*

To bridle a Goddeſs is no very delicate idea: but why muſt ſhe be bridled? becauſe ſhe longs to launch; an act which was never hindered by a bridle: and whither would ſhe launch? into a nobler ſtrain. In the firſt line ſhe is a horſe, in the ſecond a boat; and the care of the poet is to keep his horſe or his boat from ſinging.*

A good rule has been ſuggeſted for examining the propriety of metaphors, when we ſuſpect them to be of a mixed kind: we ſhould conſider what ſort of a figure the image they preſent to the mind would exhibit upon canvas. By this method, we ſhould become ſenſible, whether incongruous circumſtances were mixed, or the object was preſented in one natural and conſiſtent point of view.

VI. It is unpleaſant to find different metaphors joined in the ſame period, even where they are preſerved diſtinct. The rapid tranſition diſtracts the mind; and the images are rendered too faint to produce any powerful effect upon the imagination.

It is alſo improper to begin a ſentence with a metaphor, and finiſh it with a ſimile, or to begin it with a ſimile, and finiſh it with a metaphor.

The ſwell of the ſea continued, long after the ſtorm was over; and we have ſeen theſe parties kick and cuff like drunken men, when they were both of the ſame ſide.

Bolingbroke's Diſſertation on Parties.

VII. Metaphorical and natural expreſſions ought never

* Johnſon's Life of Addiſon.

to be ſo interwoven together that part of the ſentence muſt be underſtood figuratively, and part literally. The imagination cannot follow with ſufficient eaſe, changes ſo ſudden and unprepared. A metaphor begun, and not carried on, has no beauty. Inſtances of ſuch incorrect compoſition are without number. I ſhall content myſelf with giving a ſingle example.

When thus, as I may ſay, before the uſe of the loadſtone, or knowledge of the compaſs, I was ſailing in a vaſt ocean, without other help than the polar ſtar of the ancients, and the rules of the French ſtage among the moderns.

Dryden, Dedication of Juvenal.

Here the writer ſuddenly falls from the polar-ſtar, and alights upon the French ſtage.

VIII. Metaphors ſhould not be too far purſued. If the reſemblance on which the figure is founded, be long dwelt upon, and carried into all its minute circumſtances, we form an allegory inſtead of a metaphor; we fatigue the reader with this play of fancy, and likewiſe render our diſcourſe obſcure. This is called the hunting a metaphor down. Shafteſbury is ſometimes guilty of purſuing his metaphors too far. Fond, to an uncommon degree, of every decoration of ſtyle, when he has once hit upon a figure that pleaſes, he always ſeems unwilling to part with it. Thus, having repreſented ſoliloquy under the metaphor of a proper method of evacuation for an author, he purſues the figure through ſeveral pages, under all the forms "of diſcharging crudities, throwing off froth and ſcum, bodily operation, taking phyſic, curing indigeſtion, giving vent to choler, bile, flatulences, and tumours;*" till, at laſt, the idea becomes perfectly nauſeous and diſguſting.

IX. There is a double beauty in figures of this kind when they are not only metaphors but alluſions. Thus a very original poet, ſpeaking of the advantages of exerciſe in diſſipating thoſe gloomy vapours which are apt to hang upon ſome minds, employs the following image:

Throw but a ſtone, the giant dies. . . . *Green.*

* Shafteſbury's Advice to an Author.

The metophor here is conceived with great propriety of thought, if we conſider it only in its primary view; but when we ſee it pointing ſtill farther, and hinting at the ſtory of David and Goliah, it receives a very conſiderable improvement from the double application.

Several examples of impropriety in the uſe of metaphor have been pointed out: we ſhall now turn to the contemplation of examples of a different kind.

O! when the growling winds contend, and all
The ſounding foreſt fluctuates in the ſtorm,
To ſink in warm repoſe, and hear the din
Howl o'er the ſteady battlements. *Armſtrong.*

Here the word *fluctuates* is uſed with admirable efficacy: it not only exhibits an image of ſtruggling, but alſo echoes to the ſenſe.* The metaphor is ſimple and conſiſtent: it depends upon the reſemblance between the waves of the ſea, and the violent agitation of trees during a ſtorm.

I have ſometimes conſidered the boſom of an old maid as a kind of cell, in which it was intended that the lively bee, Affection, ſhould treaſure up its collected ſweets; but this bee happening to periſh, before it could properly ſettle on the flowers that ſhould afford its wealth, the vacant cell may unluckily become the abode of that drone Indifference, or of the waſp Malignity. *Hayley's Eſſay on Old Maids.*

The ingenious work from which this paſſage is extracted, exhibits many other beautiful inſtances of metaphorical language.

Addiſon, in his excellent critique on Paradiſe Loſt, is taking notice of thoſe changes in nature which the author of that truly divine poem deſcribes as immediately ſucceeding the fall. Among other prodigies, Milton repreſents the ſun in an eclipſe, and at the ſame time a bright cloud in the weſtern regions of the heavens deſcending with a band of angels. The critic, to ſhew his author's art and judgment in the conduct and diſpoſition of this ſublime ſcenery, employs the following metaphor:

The whole theatre of nature is darkened, that this glorious machine may appear in all its luſtre and magnificence.

* Goldſmith's Eſſays, vol. ii. eſſay xvii.

Here the figure is beautiful and expreſſive.

Speaking of the behaviour of Charles I. to his laſt Parliament;

About a month after their meeting, he diſſolved them; and as ſoon as he diſſolved them, he repented; but he repented too late of his raſhneſs. Well might he repent; for the veſſel was now full, and this laſt drop made the waters of bitterneſs overflow. Here we draw the curtain and put an end to our remarks.

Bolingbroke's Remarks on the Hiſtory of England.

Nothing could be more happily conducted. A figure of this kind, judiciouſly managed, forms a ſpirited and dignified concluſion to a ſubject. The author retires with a good grace, and leaves a ſtrong impreſſion on the reader's mind.

The judicious uſe of metaphor ſerves to add light to the expreſſion and energy to the ſentiment. But on the contrary, when this figure is unſkilfully employed, it tends effectually to cloud the ſenſe; and upon ſome occaſions, may even tend to conceal the author's want of meaning. This may happen, not only where there is in the ſame ſentence a mixture of diſcordant metaphors, but alſo where the metaphorical ſtyle is too long continued, or too far purſued. The reaſon is obvious. In common ſpeech the words are the immediate ſigns of the thought. But here the caſe is different: for when a writer, inſtead of adopting ſuch metaphors as naturally and opportunely preſent themſelves, rummages the univerſe in queſt of theſe flowers of oratory, and piles them one above another; when he cannot ſo properly be ſaid to uſe metaphor, as to ſpeak in metaphor, or rather from metaphor he runs into allegory, and thence into ænigma; his words cannot be affirmed to be the *immediate* ſigns of his thoughts; they are the ſigns of the ſigns of his thoughts. His compoſition may then be termed what Spencer not unjuſtly ſtiles his *Faery Queen, a perpetual allegory or dark conceit.*

Writers that fall into this error, are often miſled by a deſire of flouriſhing on the ſeveral attributes of a metaphor which they have pompouſly uſhered into their diſcourſe, without taking the trouble to examine whether there be any qualities in the ſubject to which theſe attributes can with juſtice and perſpicuity be applied. Of exuberance of metaphor I ſhall produce one example:

Men muſt acquire a very peculiar and ſtrong habit of turning their eye inwards, in order to explore the interior regions and receſſes of the mind, the hollow caverns of deep thought, the private ſeats of fancy, and the waſtes and wilderneſſes, as well as the more fruitful and cultivated tracts of this obſcure climate.

Shafteſbury's Miſcellaneous Reflections.

Here the author having determined to repreſent the human mind, under the metaphor of a country, revolves in his thoughts the various objects which might be found in a country, but has never dreamt of conſidering whether there be any common points of reſemblance between theſe ſubjects of his figure. Hence the ſtrange parade he makes with *regions, receſſes, hollow caverns, private ſeats, waſtes, wilderneſſes, fruitful and cultivated tracts*; terms which, though they have an appropriate meaning as applied to a country, have no definite ſignification when applied to mind. Some objects may, without impropriety, be alluded to in a curſory manner, though they will become ridiculous by being too long tortured in a figure or trope. Thus, notwithſtanding the impropriety of the paſſage now quoted from Shafteſbury, there is nothing reprehenſible in the following couplet, which contains a metaphor of the ſame nature and origin:

Farewel, for clearer ken deſign'd,
The dim diſcover'd tracts of mind. *Collins.*

CHAP. XVII.

OF ALLEGORY.

AN allegory may be conſidered as a continued metaphor. It conſiſts in repreſenting one ſubject by another analogous to it. The ſubject thus repreſented is kept out of view; and we are left to diſcover it by reflection. This furniſhes a very pleaſant exerciſe to our faculties.

There cannot be a finer or more correct allegory than the following, in which the Jewiſh nation is repreſented, under the ſymbol of a vineyard:

Thou haſt brought a vine out of Egypt: thou haſt caſt out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedſt room before it, and didſt cauſe it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the ſhadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. Why haſt thou broken down her hedges, ſo that all they which paſs by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waſte it, and the wild beaſts of the field doth devour it. Return, we beſeech thee, O God of Hoſts; look down from heaven, and behold and viſit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch which thou madeſt ſtrong for thyſelf. *Pſalms.*

Here there is no circumſtance that does not ſtrictly agree with a vine; while at the ſame time, the whole quadrates happily with the Jewiſh ſtate repreſented by this figure. It is the principal requiſite in the conduct of an allegory, that the figurative and the literal meaning be not inconſiſtently mixed together. If, inſtead of deſcribing the vine as waſted by the boar out of the wood, and devoured by the wild beaſt of the field, the Pſalmiſt had ſaid, that it was afflicted by heathens, or overcome by enemies, this would have ruined the allegory, and produced the ſame confuſion which has been remarked in thoſe metaphors in which the figurative and literal ſenſe are confounded together. Indeed the rules that have been given with reſpect to metaphors may alſo be applied to allegories, on account of the affinity they bear to each other. The only material difference between them, beſides the one being ſhort, and the other prolonged, is that a metaphor always explains itſelf by the words which are connected with it in their proper and natural meaning. When I ſay, "Wallace was a thunderbolt of war," "in peace, Fingal was the gale of ſpring;" the thunderbolt of war, and the gale of ſpring are ſufficiently interpreted by the mention of Wallace and Fingal. But an allegory may be allowed to ſtand more diſconnected with the literal meaning; the interpretation is not ſo directly pointed out, but left to our own diſcovery.

Allegories were a favorite method of delivering inſtruction in ancient times: for, what we call fables or parables, are no other than allegories; and thoſe fables are to be found among the earlieſt productions of literature. They

repreſent the diſpoſitions of men by words and actions attributed to beaſts and inanimate objects; and what we call the moral, is the ſimple meaning of the allegory. An ænigma or riddle is alſo a figure of this kind. One thing is imaged by another, but purpoſely rendered obſcure by being involved in a complication of circumſtances. Where a riddle is not intended, it is always a fault in allegory to be too dark. The meaning ſhould be eaſily ſeen through the figure employed to ſhadow it. The proper mixture of light and ſhade in ſuch compoſitions, the exact adjuſtment of all the figurative circumſtances with the literal ſenſe, ſo as neither to lay the meaning too open, nor cover it too cloſely, has ever been found an affair of great nicety; and in allegorical compoſitions of any length, few writers have ſucceeded.

An allegory is in every reſpect ſimilar to a hieroglyphical painting, excepting only, that words are uſed inſtead of colours. Their effects are preciſely the ſame: a hieroglyphic raiſes two images in the mind; one ſeen, which repreſents one not ſeen. The ſame is the caſe with an allegory: the repreſentative ſubject is deſcribed; and the reſemblance leads us to apply the deſcription to the ſubject repreſented.

Nothing affords greater pleaſure than this figure, when the repreſentative ſubject bears a ſtrong analogy, in all its circumſtances, to that which is repreſented. But the choice is ſeldom ſo fortunate; the analogy being generally ſo faint and obſcure, as to puzzle inſtead of pleaſing. An allegory is ſtill more difficult in painting than in writing: the former can ſhew no reſemblance but what appears to the eye; whereas the latter hath many other reſources.

In an allegory, as well as in a metaphor, ſuch terms ought to be choſen as are literally applicable to the repreſentative ſubject: nor ought any circumſtance to be added that is not proper to that ſubject, however juſtly it may apply to the principal either in a figurative or proper ſenſe. Our view muſt never wave between the type and the anti-type.

For the farther illuſtration of the nature of allegory, I ſhall ſubjoin a few miſcellaneous examples.

My well-beloved had a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the ſtones thereof, and planted it with the choiceſt vine, and built a tower in the

midſt of it, and alſo made a wine-preſs therein; and he looked that it ſhould bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jeruſalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it ſhould bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? And now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it ſhall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it ſhall be trodden down. And I will lay it waſte: it ſhall not be pruned nor digged; but there ſhall come up briars and thorns: I will alſo command the clouds that they rain not rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of Hoſts is the houſe of Iſrael, and the men of Judah his pleaſant plant.

Iſaiah.

Wiſe men ne'er ſit and wail their loſs,
But cheerly ſeek how to redreſs their harms.
What though the maſt be now blown overboard,
The cable broke, the holding anchor loſt,
And half our ſailors ſwallowed in the flood?
Yet lives our pilot ſtill. Is't meet that he
Should leave the helm, and like a fearful lad,
With tearful eyes add water to the ſea,
And give more ſtrength to that which hath too much;
While in his moan the ſhip ſplits on a rock,
Which induſtry and courage might have ſav'd?

Shakſpeare.

Ha! thou haſt rous'd
The lion in his den; he ſtalks abroad,
And the wide foreſt trembles at his roar.

Southerne.

Did I but purpoſe to embark with thee
On the ſmooth ſurface of a ſummer's ſea,
While gentle zephyrs play with proſperous gale,
And fortune's favour fills the ſwelling ſails;
But would forſake the ſhip, and make the ſhore,
When the winds whiſtle, and the tempeſts roar!

Prior.

CHAP. XVIII.

OF THE CONCISE AND THE DIFFUSE STYLE.

IT has already been hinted, that, as words are copies of our ideas, there muſt always be a very intimate connection between the manner in which every writer employs words and his manner of thinking; and that, by the peculiarity of his thought and expreſſion, there is a certain character imprinted on his ſtyle, which may be denominated his manner. The terms which we uſe in order to expreſs the general manner of different authors, bear ſome reference to their mode of thinking; but refer chiefly to their mode of expreſſion. The diſtinctions of nervous and feeble, ſimple and affected, ariſe from the whole tenor of a writer's language; and comprehend the effect produced by all thoſe parts of ſtyle which we have already conſidered; the choice which he makes of ſingle words, his arrangement of theſe in ſentences; the degree of his preciſion: and his embelliſhment, by means of muſical cadence, or the various figures of ſpeech.

That different ſubjects require to be treated in different ſorts of ſtyle, is a poſition too evident to ſtand in need of illuſtration. Philoſophy demands one kind of ſtyle, oratory another; and different parts of the ſame compoſition require a variation in the ſtyle and manner. But amidſt this variety, we ſtill expect to find, in the writings of the ſame individual, ſome degree of uniformity, or conſiſtency with himſelf; we expect to find ſome predominant character of ſtyle impreſſed on all his works, which ſhall be ſuited to his particular genius, and turn of mind. Wherever there is real and native genius, it gives a determination to one kind of ſtyle rather than another. Where nothing of this appears, where there is no marked or peculiar character in the compoſitions of an author, we are apt to infer, that he writes from imitation, and not from the impulſe of original genius.

One of the moſt obvious diſtinctions of ſtyle ariſes from the conciſeneſs or the diffuſeneſs with which an author expreſſes his ſentiments. A conciſe writer compreſſes his

thoughts into the fewest possible words; he employs none but such as are most significant; he lops off every vague and redundant expression. Ornament he does not reject; he may be lively and figurative; but his ornaments are introduced in order to add force to his diction. He never repeats the same thought. His sentences are arranged with compactness and strength rather than with grace and harmony. The utmost precision is studied in them, and they are commonly designed to suggest more to the reader's imagination than they directly express. On the other hand, a diffuse writer places his ideas in a variety of lights, and gives the reader every possible assistance for understanding them completely. He is not solicitous to express them at once in their full extent, because he generally repeats the impression; and what he wants in strength, he purposes to supply by copiousness. Writers of this character commonly love magnificence and amplification. Their periods naturally run out into some length; and having room for ornament, they admit it freely.

Each of these manners has its peculiar advantages; and each becomes faulty when carried to the extreme. The extreme of conciseness degenerates into abruptness and obscurity; and it is apt to introduce a style too pointed, and bordering on the epigrammatic. The extreme of diffuseness becomes weak and languid, and fatigues the reader. However, to one or other of these two manners, a writer may lean according as his genius prompts him; and, under the general character of a concise, or of a diffuse style, may possess much beauty in his composition.

In judging when it is proper to incline to the concise, and when to the diffuse manner, we must be directed by the nature of the composition. Discourses which are to be spoken require a more copious style, than books which are to be read. The whole meaning must be caught from the mouth of the speaker, without the advantage which books afford of pausing at pleasure, and reviewing what appears obscure. great conciseness is always to be avoided. We should never presume too much on the quickness of our hearer's understanding; but our style ought to be such, that any person of common capacity may comprehend our meaning without effort. A flowing copious style, therefore, is required in all

public ſpeakers. They ought at the ſame time to guard againſt ſuch a degree of diffuſion as renders them languid and tireſome.

In written compoſitions, a certain degree of conciſeneſs poſſeſſes great advantages. It appears lively; keeps up the attention; makes a ſtronger impreſſion; and gratifies the mind by ſupplying more exerciſe to the reader's faculties.

A conciſe comprehenſive ſtyle is a great ornament in narration; and a ſuperfluity of unneceſſary words altogether improper. A judicious ſelection of ſtriking circumſtances clothed in nervous and conciſe language, produces a delightful effect. In this ſtyle, Tacitus excels all writers, ancient and modern: and after him, Oſſian juſtly merits the place of diſtinction.

Son of Fingal! doſt thou not behold the darkneſs of Crothar's hall of ſhells? My ſoul was not dark at the feaſt, when my people lived. I rejoiced in the preſence of ſtrangers, when my ſon ſhone in the hall. But, Oſſian, he is a beam that has departed, and left no ſtreak of light behind. He is fallen, ſon of Fingal, in the battles of his father.—Rothmar, the chief of graſſy Tromlo, heard that my eyes had failed; he heard that my arms were fixed in the hall, and the pride of his ſoul aroſe. He came towards Cromla; my people fell before him. I took my arms in the hall, but what could ſightleſs Crothar do? My ſteps were unequal; my grief was great. I wiſhed for the days that were paſt; days! wherein I fought, and won in the field of blood. My ſon returned from the chace; the fair-haired Fovar-gormo. He had not lifted his ſword in battle, for his arm was young. But the ſoul of the youth was great; the fire of valour burnt in his eye. He ſaw the diſordered ſteps of his father, and his ſigh aroſe. King of Croma, he ſaid, is it becauſe thou haſt no ſon? is it for the weakneſs of Fovar-gormo's arm that thy ſighs ariſe? I begin, my father, to feel the ſtrength of my arm; I have drawn the ſword of my youth, and I have bent the bow. Let me meet this Rothmar, with the youths of Croma; let me meet him, O my father, for I feel my burning ſoul.

And thou ſhalt meet him, I ſaid, ſon of the ſightleſs Crothar! But let others advance before thee, that I may hear the tread of thy feet at thy return; for my eyes behold thee not, fair-haired Fovar-gormo!—He went, he met the foe;

he fell. The foe advances towards Croma. He who ſlew my ſon is near, with all his pointed ſpears. *Oſſian.*

In addreſſes to the paſſions, the conciſe manner ought to be adopted, in preference to the diffuſe. When we become prolix, we are always in hazard of cooling the reader. And when the imagination and heart are properly engaged, they ſupply many particulars to greater advantage than an author can diſplay them. The caſe is different, when we addreſs ourſelves to the underſtanding; as in all matters of reaſoning, explication, and inſtruction. There I would prefer a more free and diffuſe manner. When you would captivate the fancy, or engage the heart, be conciſe; when you would inform the underſtanding, be more copious and diffuſe. The underſtanding moves more ſlowly, and requires to be aſſiſted in its operations.

A diffuſe ſtyle generally abounds in long periods; and a conciſe ſtyle often in ſhort ones. It is not, however, to be inferred, that long or ſhort ſentences are fully characteriſtic of the one or the other. An author may always employ ſhort periods, and yet be very diffuſe: a ſcanty portion of ſentiment may ſpread through a great number of theſe periods. Some authors, by the ſhortneſs and quaintneſs of their ſentences, may at firſt view appear very conciſe, without being ſo in reality. They transfigure the ſame thought into many different forms, and make it paſs for a new one, only by giving a new turn to the expreſſion. Thus, moſt of the French writers compoſe in ſhort ſentences; though their ſtyle in general is far from being conciſe. They commonly break down into two or three periods, a portion of thought which an Engliſh author would crowd into one.

In like manner, an author may employ long periods and yet be conciſe: his periods may be long, without being overloaded with any redundancy of expreſſion. Thus in the writings of Lord Kames, we frequently meet with lengthened ſentences, though ſeldom with errors in point of conciſeneſs.

The direct effect of ſhort ſentences is to render ſtyle briſk and lively, but not always conciſe. They keep the mind awake by means of quick ſucceſſive impulſes; and give to compoſition more of a ſpirited character. Long periods are grave and ſtately; but, like all grave things, they are apt to become dull.

The following quotation may serve as an instance of the copious and diffuse style:

"I can easily admire poetry, and yet without adoring it; I can allow it to arise from the greatest excellency of natural temper, or the greatest race of native genius, without exceeding the reach of what is human, or giving it any approaches of divinity, which is, I doubt, debased or dishonoured by ascribing to it any thing that is in the compass of our action, or even comprehension, unless it be raised by an immediate influence from itself. I cannot allow poetry to be more divine in its effects than in its causes, nor any operation produced by it to be more than purely natural, or to deserve any other sort of wonder than those of music, or of natural magic, however any of them have appeared to minds little versed in the speculations of nature, of occult qualities, and the force of numbers or of sounds. Whoever talks of drawing down the moon from heaven, by force of verses or of charms, either believes not himself, or too easily believes what others told him, or perhaps follows an opinion begun by the practice of some poet, upon the facility of some people, who, knowing the time when an eclipse would happen, told them he would by his charms call down the moon at such an hour, and was by them thought to have performed it.

When I read that charming description in Virgil's eighth Eclogue of all sorts of charms and fascinations by verses, by images, by knots, by numbers, &c., by herbs, employed upon occasion of a violent passion, from a jealous or disappointed love, I have recourse to the strong impressions of fables and of poetry, to the easy mistakes of popular opinions, to the force of imagination, to the secret virtues of several herbs, and to the powers of sounds: and I am sorry the natural history or account of fascination, has not employed the pen of some person of such excellent wit and deep thought and learning as Casaubon, who writ that curious and useful treatise on enthusiasm, and by it discovered the hidden or mistaken sources of that delusion, so frequent in all regions and religions of the world, and which had so fatally spread over our country in that age in which this treasure was so seasonably published. It is too much to be lamented that he lived not to complete that work in the second part he promised; or that his friends neglected the pub-

liſhing it, if it were left in papers, though loose and unfiniſhed. I think a clear account of enthuſiaſm and faſcination, from their natural cauſes, would very much deſerve from mankind in general, as well as from the commonwealth of learning; might perhaps prevent ſo many public diſorders, and ſave the lives of ſo many innocent, deluded, or deluding people, who ſuffer ſo frequently upon account of witches and wizards. I have ſeen many miſerable examples of this kind in my youth at home; and though the humour of faſhion be a good deal worn out of the world within thirty or forty years paſt, yet it ſtill remains in ſeveral remote parts of Germany, Sweden, and ſome other countries.

Temple on Poetry.

Of the conciſe ſtyle, I ſhall ſubjoin another example:

A man, while awake, is conſcious of a continued train of perceptions and ideas paſſing in his mind. It requires no activity on his part to carry on the train: nor can he at will add to the train any idea that has no connection with it. At the ſame time we learn from daily experience, that the train of our thoughts is not regulated by chance: and if it depend not upon will, nor upon chance, by what law is it governed? The queſtion is of importance in the ſcience of human nature; and I promiſe beforehand, that it will be found of great importance in the fine arts.

It appears that the relations by which things are linked together, have a great influence in directing the train of thought. Taking a view of external objects, we ſee that their inherent properties are not more remarkable than their various relations which connect them together: one thing, perceived to be a cauſe, is connected with its ſeveral effects: ſome things are connected by contiguity in time, others by contiguity in ſpace; ſome are connected by reſemblance; ſome by contraſt; ſome go before, ſome follow: not a ſingle thing appears ſolitary and altogether devoid of connection; the only difference is, that ſome are ultimately connected, ſome more ſlightly, ſome near, ſome at a diſtance.

Experience will ſatisfy us of what reaſon makes probable, that the train of our thoughts is in a great meaſure regulated by the foregoing connections: an external object is no ſooner preſented to us in idea, than it ſuggeſts to the mind other objects with which it is connected; and in this manner

is a train of thoughts composed. Such is the law of succession; whether an original law, or whether directed by some latent principle, is doubtful; and probably will forever remain so. This law, however, is not inviolable: it sometimes happens, that an idea arises in the mind without that connection; as for example, after a profound sleep.*

Kames's Elements of Criticism.

In this passage nothing is vague or redundant: every word and expression is appropriate.

Of all writers, ancient or modern, Aristotle, Tacitus, and Montesquieu afford the most remarkable instances of concisenes in style. The language of Locke and Clarke, though far from being polished, is also concise, and, upon the whole, not badly adapted to the profound speculations of these authors. The style of Dr. Reid is entitled to no small degree of praise on account of this quality. He always expresses himself with clearness, and seldom makes use of a word that could be changed for a better.

Of a beautiful and magnificent diffuseness, the works of Plato and Cicero exhibit, beyond doubt, the most illustrious instances that can be given. And, among our own countrymen, Addison and Temple afford examples of the same kind of excellence.

XIX.

OF THE NERVOUS AND THE FEEBLE STYLE.

IT is generally imagined, that the terms nervous, and feeble, when applied to style, are synonymous with concise and diffuse. This however is not the case. It is indeed true, that diffuse writers have, for the most part, some de-

* The doctrine which Lord Kames here inculcates is of the utmost importance; it is indeed the very foundation of the philosophy of the human mind. The reader will find it completely unfolded in the writings of Hobbes, Locke, Hartley, Hume, Beattie, Gerard, Priestley, and Stewart.

gree of feebleneſs, and that nervous writers will generally incline to conciſeneſs of expreſſion: but this is by no means an univerſal rule. There are inſtances of writers, who, in the midſt of a full and copious ſtyle, have maintained a great degree of ſtrength. And on the other hand, an author may be parſimonious of his words, without attaining to any remarkable vigour of diction.

The foundations of a nervous or a weak ſtyle are laid in an author's manner of thinking. If his conceptions are ſtrong, his expreſſions will be energetic. But if he have only an indiſtinct view of his ſubject; if his ideas be looſe and wavering; if his genius be ſuch, or, at the time of his writing, ſo careleſsly exerted, that he has no firm hold of the conception which he would communicate to us, the marks of all this will plainly appear in his ſtyle. Several unmeaning words and looſe epithets will be found: his expreſſions will be vague and general; his arrangement indiſcreet and feeble. We ſhall be able to conceive ſomewhat of his meaning, but our conceptions will be faint. Whereas a nervous writer, whether he employs an extended or a conciſe ſtyle, gives us always a ſtrong impreſſion of his meaning: his mind is full of his ſubject, and his words are all expreſſive; every phraſe and every figure which he uſes, tends to render the pleaſure which he would ſet before us, more lively and complete.

Every author, in every compoſition, ought to ſtudy to expreſs himſelf with ſome degree of ſtrength. In proportion as he approaches the feeble, he becomes a bad writer. In all kinds of writing, however, the ſame degree of ſtrength is not required. But the more grave and weighty any compoſition is, the more ſhould this quality predominate in the ſtyle. Hiſtory, philoſophy, and ſome ſpecies of oratory require it in an eminent degree; while in romances, epiſtles, and eſſays of a lighter caſt, it is not ſo abſolutely requiſite.

Too great a ſtudy of ſtrength, to the neglect of other deſirable qualities of ſtyle, is apt to betray writers into a harſhneſs of manner. Harſhneſs ariſes from the uſe of unauthoriſed words, from forced inverſions in the conſtruction of ſentences, and from the neglect of ſmoothneſs or harmony. This is reckoned the general fault of ſome of the earlieſt of our Engliſh claſſics; ſuch as Bacon, Raleigh,

Hooker, Milton, and other writers of thoſe days. The ſtyle of theſe writers is, for the moſt part, nervous and energetic in an eminent degree: but the language in their hands was very different from what it is at preſent. They were too fond of Latin idioms: in the ſtructure of their ſentences, inverſion is often carried to an unwarrantable length. Of that kind of ſtyle which is here alluded to, it will be proper to produce a few examples:

Though for no other cauſe, yet for this, that poſterity may know we have not looſely, through ſilence, permitted things to paſs away as in a dream, there ſhall be for men's information, extant this much concerning the preſent ſtate of the church of God eſtabliſhed amongſt us, and their careful endeavours which would have upheld the ſame.

Hooker's Eccleſiaſtical Polity.

We ſee ſcholars many, more than others ordinarily, ſubject to melancholy, becauſe their retired courſes of life, and privacy of ſtudy is a great means to feed that humour where it is naturally found: yet neither followeth it therefore, that all ſcholars live uncomfortable lives, becauſe ſome do ſo, that are poſſeſſed and oppreſſed with that humour. Nor may that rightly be aſcribed to ſtudy and learning, which not it, but the conſtitution of ſome ſtudents, produceth.

Gataker's Joy of the Juſt.

With regard to the tranſpoſition of words and members out of their natural order, critics have entered into much diſcuſſion. It is agreed on all hands, that ſuch tranſpoſition or inverſion beſtows upon a period a very ſenſible degree of force and elevation: and yet writers ſeem to be at a loſs in what manner to account for this effect. Whether, upon the whole, we have gained or loſt by departing from this mode of arrangement, has by ſome been doubted. It appears to me, that the genius of the Engliſh language does not naturally admit of much inverſion. But, however this may be, ſuch violent inſtances of tranſpoſition as occur in the paſſages lately quoted, are altogether obſolete: and no modern writer could adopt them without the cenſure of harſhneſs and affectation.

Among thoſe who firſt laid aſide the frequent inverſions which prevailed among writers of the former age, we may reckon Cowley and Clarendon. The writings of Temple alſo

contributed much to advance the language to its present ſtate: but to thoſe of Dryden it is chiefly indebted for its ſmoothneſs and elegance. Dryden began to write about the time of the Reſtoration, and continued long in his literary career. He poſſeſſed genius, erudition, ſcience: he brought to the ſtudy of his native tongue, a vigorous mind fraught with various knowledge. There is a richneſs in his diction, a copiouſneſs, eaſe, and variety in his expreſſion, which have never been ſurpaſſed by any of thoſe who have come after him. His clauſes are never balanced, nor his periods modeled; every word ſeems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little, is gay; what is great, is ſplendid. Though all is eaſy, nothing is feeble; though all ſeems careleſs, there is nothing harſh; and though, ſince the publication of many of his works, more than a century has elaſped, yet they have nothing uncouth or obſolete.*

Some are of opinion, that it is elegance rather than ſtrength, which forms the chief characteriſtic of modern Engliſh authors. They maintain, that, ſince the cloſe of the laſt century, few ſpecimens have been exhibited of energetic compoſition, and that purity and elegance have been ſtudied, to the neglect of ſtrength and vigour. This charge ſeems to be unſupported by facts. What writer ever expreſſed himſelf with greater energy than Johnſon? Or who ever diſcovered any want of this quality in the compoſitions of Warburton, Hawkeſworth, Burke, Robertſon, and Stuart? From the catalogue of living authors, ſeveral great names might alſo be ſelected.

Vigour is ſometimes confounded with harſhneſs: it is imagined, that a writer cannot be energetic, without being rugged. "They would not have it run without rubs, as if that ſtyle were more ſtrong and manly, that ſtruck the ear with a kind of unevenneſs."†

Thoſe who complain, that, with regard to energy of expreſſion, no writer of the preſent age can be compared with Bacon and Raleigh, ought to impute this circumſtance to another cauſe than the ſtudy of purity and elegance. If the foundations of a nervous or weak ſtyle be laid in the author's manner of thinking, the matter may readily be explained.

* Johnſon's Life of Dryden. † Jonſon's Diſcoveries.

Bacon and Raleigh poſſeſſed greater genius than thoſe who are brought into competition with them.

I ſhall now endeavour to ſelect ſome inſtances of the vigorous ſtyle; though the general character of a writer cannot be collected from detached paſſages.

About this time Warburton began to make his appearance in the firſt ranks of learning. He was a man of vigorous faculties, a mind fervid and vehement, ſupplied by inceſſant and unlimited enquiry, with wonderful extent and variety of knowledge, which yet had not oppreſſed his imagination, nor clouded his perſpicuity. To every work he brought a memory full fraught, together with a fancy fertile of original combinations, and at once exerted the powers of the ſcholar, the reaſoner, and the wit. But his knowledge was too multifarious to be always exact, and his purſuits too eager to be always cautious. His abilites gave him an haughty confidence, which he diſdained to conceal or mollify; and his impatience of oppoſition diſpoſed him to treat his adverſaries with ſuch contemptuous ſuperiority as made his readers commonly his enemies, and excited againſt the advocate the wiſhes of ſome who favored the cauſe. He ſeems to have adopted the Roman emperor's determination, *oderint dum metuant*; he uſed no allurements of gentle language, but wiſhed to compel rather than perſuade. His ſtyle is copious without ſelection, and forcible without neatneſs; he took the words that preſented themſelves; his diction is coarſe and impure, and his ſentences are unmeaſured. *Johnson's Life of Pope.*

From the writings of this author a more admirable ſpecimen might perhaps be ſelected; but I have choſen this, on account of its reference to our preſent ſubject.

The dignity of his ſentiments, and the energy of his ſtyle ſtand almoſt unrivalled. It has been aſſerted, that, by the introduction of a multitude of new words, he has often violated the purity of the Engliſh language. But let thoſe who advance that opinion candidly inquire, whether, upon *many* occaſions, he has adopted Latin derivations, when the vocabulary of his vernacular tongue could have ſupplied him with words equally expreſſive. His own ſtupendous intellect was the mould of his language. When he could not find terms adequate to his conceptions, he invented them for the preſent emergency. It may perhaps be granted that in a few inſtances he has adopted new words without any apparent ne-

ceſſity: but upon the whole, he has certainly added force and harmony to the language in which he wrote. When another Johnſon ſhall ariſe, let him aſſert the ſame rights.

"Had his conceptions been narrower," ſays Mr. Boſwell, "his expreſſion would have been eaſier. His ſentences have a dignified march; and, it is certain, that his example has given a general elevation to the language of his country, for many of our beſt writers have approached very near to him; and from the influence which he has had upon our compoſition, ſcarcely any thing is written now that is not better expreſſed than was uſual before he appeared to lead the national taſte."*

Chriſtianity was more calculated, than the ſuperſtitions of paganiſm, to impreſs the imagination and the heart. The rite of baptiſm taught the follower of Odin to transfer his worſhip to Chriſt. To defend Chriſtianity with his ſword and his life, became a ſacred vow, to which every knight was ambitious to ſubmit. He conſidered himſelf as a ſaint, as well as a hero; and on the foundation of his piety, the ſucceſſors of St. Peter were to precipitate the armies of Europe upon Aſia, and to commence the cruſades, thoſe memorable monuments of ſuperſtition and heroiſm. The lady, not leſs than the knight, was to feel the influence of this religion. Society was to be diſturbed with the ſublime extravagance of fanatics, who were to court perfections out of the order of nature. Mortifications, auſterities, and penances, were to be meritorious in proportion to their duration and cruelty. The powers and affections of the mind and the heart were to ſicken and to languiſh in frivolous and fatiguing ceremonials. The eye of beauty was to ſadden in monaſteries and in ſolitude, or to light the unholy fires of a rampart prieſthood. The deity was to be worſhipped in abjectneſs and in terror, as if he contemned the works he had made, and took delight in human dejection and wretchedneſs.

Stuart's View of Society.

It is with juſtice that Mr. Hayley diſtinguiſhes Dr. Stuart as an author poſſeſſed of "all the energy of genius."† His ſtyle is bold and vigorous; and upon ſome occaſions he even riſes to the heights of eloquence. The Engliſh language can-

* Boſwell's Life of Johnſon, vol. i. p. 190.

† Hayley's Eſſay on Hiſtory, epiſt. iii. note xii.

boast of few such finished works as his admirable *View of Society in Europe.* The subject is interesting and important; and he has applied himself to the investigation of it, with great assiduity and research. In every page of his work, he displays wonderful learning and sagacity.

Wherever they marched, their rout was marked with blood. They ravaged or destroyed all around them. They made no distinction between what was sacred and what was profane. They respected no age, or sex, or rank. What escaped the fury of the first inundation, perished in those which followed it. The most fertile and populous provinces were converted into deserts, in which were scattered the ruins of villages and cities, that afforded shelter to a few miserable inhabitants whom chance had preserved, or the sword of the enemy, weary with destroying, had spared. The conquerors who first settled in the countries which they had wasted, were expelled or exterminated by new invaders, who, coming from regions farther removed from the civilized parts of the world, were still more fierce and rapacious. This brought new calamities upon mankind, which did not cease until the north, by pouring forth successive swarms, was drained of people, and could no longer furnish instruments of destruction. Famine and pestilence, which always march in the train of war, when it ravages with such inconsiderate cruelty, raged in every part of Europe, and completed its sufferings.

Robertson's View of Society.

The style of Robertson is at once polished and energetic. It seems to approach the very borders of perfection. The objections which have been urged against it by a late writer, it may be here proper to consider. "The historian of Charles the Fifth," it is observed, "possesses so many excellencies, that it is almost sacrilegious to detract from his merit. But no writer is perfect; and I doubt not, from the opinion I entertain of his taste and candour, that he will confess, when the ardour of composition is abated, that his style has deviated from the historical to the declamatory. He relates the councils as well as the wars of nations with all the vehemence of a Demosthenes, and the rapid eloquence of a Ciceronian Philippic. The style is glowing and animated in a high degree; but does Nature dictate, that

not justly entitled. His words are well chosen, but the collocation of them is feeble and effeminate, though plainly elaborate and affected.* His pages abound with idle epithets, which, while they load and fatigue the ear, add little to the meaning and less to the force of the period which they are intended to adorn. He is tinctured with a disgusting affectation of fastidious delicacy. There is a tedious monotony in his style, which renders the reading a toil, and which will gradually consign his laborious work to its peaceful shelf.† His Roman History is at present held in great estimation; but a work which discovers such a want of true Attic taste, cannot long maintain its popularity. In due time it will undoubtedly experience as great a revolution in its fate, as did that mighty empire, whose decline and fall it commemorates.

If it be necessary to produce any instance of the feeble style, the following may, I think, be selected with sufficient propriety:

To read such vast numbers as he did, he latterly made use of a method as extraordinary as any thing I have hitherto mentioned of him. When a book first came into his hands, he would *look the title-page all over, then dip here and there* in the preface, dedication and advertisements; if there were any; *and then* cast his eyes on each of the divisions, the different sections, or chapters, *and then he would be able for ever to know what that book contained:* for he remembered as steadily, as he conceived rapidly.

It was after he had taken *to this way of fore-shortening* his reading, if I may be allowed so odd an expression; *and I think I rather may*, because he conceived the matter almost as completely in this short way, as if he had read it at full length; that a Priest, who had composed a panygeric on

* With regard to the use of the English language, Mr. Gibbon may be considered as labouring in some measure under the peculiar disadvantages of a foreigner. A great part of his life was spent at Lausanne in Switzerland; a circumstance to which the appearance of perpetual affectation in his style may with great propriety be attributed. (See Gibbon's *Memoirs of his Life and Writings.*)

† Knox's Essays, No. xxii.

one of his favorite saints, brought it to Magliabechi, as a preſent. He had read it over the way above mentioned; only the title-page, and the heads of the chapters; *and then* thanked him very kindly for his excellent treatiſe. The author, in ſome pain, aſked him, "Whether that was all he intended to read of his book?" Magliabechi coolly anſwered, "Yes; for I know very well every thing that is in it." My author for this anecdote endeavoured to account for it in the following manner: Magliabechi, ſays he, knew all that *the writers before* had ſaid of this ſaint; he knew this particular father's turn and character; and *from thence* judged, what he could chooſe out of them, and what he would omit. *Spence's Life of Magliabechi.*

This paſſage ſeems to poſſeſs every poſſible fault. The ſentences are conſtructed in a very unſkilful manner; the circumſtances are often improperly placed; and the members looſe and disjointed. Nothing is expreſſed with energy; all is feeble and ungraceful. The commencement of the ſecond paragraph preſents ſo violent a ſeparation of correſponding words, that the period is involved in a conſiderable degree of obſcurity.

Nor is the author's phraſeology leſs exceptionable: it is altogether low and vulgar, as the expreſſions in Italics will ſufficiently teſtify. The laſt ſentence contains an inſtance of grammatical impropriety, which indeed is alſo to be found in many of our moſt eminent writers. The adverb *thence* neceſſarily includes the preposition *from* in its ſignification: it is therefore a ſoleciſm to join both theſe words in the ſame phraſe.

That Mr. Spence ſhould ever have been regarded as an elegant author, appears to me a very ſurprizing circumſtance.* He was, beyond all doubt, a moſt amiable, and worthy character: but the merits of the man muſt not be transferred to his writings.

* Mr. Hervey ſeems to have regarded Spence's *Dialogue on Pope's Odyſſey* as a ſtandard of perfection. By an anonymous writer of his life, it is ſaid, that "to this *elegant* and judicious diſcourſe Mr. Hervey often acknowledged that he owed more of his improvement in ſtyle and compoſition than to any other which he had ever read."

CHAP. XX.

OF THE VEHEMENT STYLE.

THE vehement riſes a degree above the nervous ſtyle. The former, however, always includes the latter: for in order to attain to any vehemence of diction, an author muſt neceſſarily be poſſeſſed of ſtrength.

The vehement ſtyle is diſtinguiſhed by a peculiar ardour of expreſſion; it is the language of a man whoſe imagination and paſſions are ſtrongly affected by the ſubject which he contemplates; and who is therefore negligent of leſſer graces, but pours forth his eloquence with the fullneſs and rapidity of a torrent. It belongs to the higher ſpecies of oratory; and indeed is rather expected from a man who declaims in a popular aſſembly, than from one who writes in the retirement of his cloſet.

Of this kind of ſtyle, the moſt ſtriking examples in our language has been exhibited by Burke and Bolingbroke.

Burke was a man of the moſt ſplendid talents, and theſe talents had been foſtered by due cultivation. He was poſſeſſed of a vigorous underſtanding, and of an imagination fervent and brilliant. His manly eloquence is almoſt unparalleled; it rolls along like a rapid and impetuous torrent, and bears down every object that riſes in oppoſition. His illuſtrations are copious and ſplendid. He is even profuſe of poetical imagery and poetical conceptions.*

* In imagery, Burke is much more copious and variegated than Cicero. Superior copiouſneſs, however, of imagery does not neceſſarily imply ſuperior fertility of imagination: the power of combination being equal, he will moſt eaſily combine who has the moſt copious materials. If there be two men of equal powers of imagination, and the one knows hiſtory and ethics, the other hiſtory and ethics equally well, and phyſics beſides, the latter may have with eaſe more abundant imagery than the former. The ſources of imagery are more numerous to the moderns, becauſe knowledge is greater. But when we particularly examine the imagery of

Bolingbroke was fitted by nature to be the demagogue of a popular aſſembly. The ſtyle which runs through all his political writings, is that of a perſon declaiming with heat rather than writing with deliberation. He abounds with rhetorical figures; and pours himſelf forth with great impetuoſity. He is copious to a fault; places the ſame thought before us in many different views; but generally with vivacity or ardour. He is bold rather than correct.—His eloquence is a torrent that flows ſtrong, but often muddy. Upon the whole, his merit as a writer would have been conſiderable, if his matter had equalled his ſtyle. But while we find much to commend in the latter, the former is entitled to no kind of praiſe. In his reaſonings, he is for the moſt part flimſy and falſe; in his political writings factious; and in what he calls his philoſophical ones, irreligious and ſophiſtical in the higheſt degree.†

In treating of the vehement ſtyle, I have not, as upon former occaſions, attempted to ſelect examples. The ſubject cannot in the preſent inſtance be elucidated in this manner. Vehemence of ſtyle can only be perceived and reliſhed by attending to a pretty long ſeries of reaſonings and illuſtrations.

Cicero and of Burke, we find Burke's to be more abundant, not only from the ſtores of modern diſcovery and practice, but from thoſe of external and moral nature, known in the time of Cicero, and at all times. Hence we may fairly infer, that the imagination of Burke was naturally more fertile than that of Cicero.

Biſſet's Life of Burke.

† Cheſterfield having mentioned Bolingbroke's *Idea of a Patriot King*, proceeds in the following manner: "I deſire that you will read it over and over again, with particular attention to the ſtyle, and to all thoſe beauties of oratory with which it is adorned. Till I read that book, I confeſs I did not know all the extent and powers of the Engliſh language. Lord Bolingbroke has both a tongue and a pen to perſuade: his manner of ſpeaking in private converſation, is full as elegant as his writings; whatever ſubject he either ſpeaks or writes upon, he adorns with the moſt ſplendid eloquence;

CHAP. XXI.

OF THE PLAIN STYLE.

A PLAIN ſtyle is one that rejects all ambitious ornaments. The writer who adopts this manner, may perhaps endeavour to diſplay his meaning with perſpicuity and preciſion; qualities of ſtyle which it muſt be confeſſed, are of the higheſt order. His compoſition may alſo be poſſeſſed of force and vivacity. But he will ſhew an indifference for what is merely ornamental. He does not ſtrive to captivate the fancy or the ear by employing rhetorical figures, or muſical arrangement. Yet it is not neceſſary, that he diſguſt his reader by a dryneſs or harſhneſs of manner. A plain ſtyle is conſiſtent with ſmoothneſs of arrangement, and a temperate uſe of metaphor; though neither of theſe is abſolutely requiſite.

In diſcuſſions of a philoſophical nature, the plain ſtyle ought to predominate. And accordingly many of the Engliſh philoſophers have employed it with propriety. Even in works which admit, or require ever ſo much ornament, there are parts where the plain manner ſhould be adopted. But it muſt be remembered, that when this is the character which a writer affects throughout his whole compoſition, great weight of matter, and great force of ſentiment, are required

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not a ſtudied or laboured eloquence, but ſuch a flowing happineſs of diction, which, (from care perhaps at firſt) is become ſo habitual to him, that even his moſt familiar converſations, if taken down in writing, would bear the preſs, without the leaſt correction either as to method or ſtyle. If his conduct in the former part of his life, had been equal to his natural and acquired talents, he would moſt juſtly have merited the epithet of all-accompliſhed."

Chesterfield's Letters to his Son, letter clxxv.

Dr Hurd ſpeaking of the work which is ſo much extolled in this paſſage, pronounces it *a contemptible pamphlet.*—(Hurd's *Life of Warburton.*) Each of theſe writers may have reaſon on his ſide: Cheſterfield ſpeaks of its ſtyle, and Hurd undoubtedly refers to its matter.

to keep up the reader's attention. Unleſs he happens to treat of mathematical ſubjects, an author ought always to beware of falling into a dryneſs of manner. This excludes ornaments of every deſcription. Content with being underſtood, it has not the leaſt aim to pleaſe either the fancy or the ear. Ariſtotle furniſhes the moſt complete example of a dry ſtyle. Never perhaps was there an author who adhered ſo rigidly to the ſtrictneſs of a didactic manner throughout all his writings, and conveyed ſo much inſtruction without the leaſt approach to ornament. With the moſt profound genius, and the moſt extenſive views, he writes like a pure intelligence, who addreſſes himſelf ſolely to the underſtanding, without making any uſe of the channel of the imagination. But this is a manner which deſerves not to be imitated. For although the value of the matter may compenſate for the dryneſs or harſhneſs of the ſtyle, yet is that dryneſs a conſiderable defect. It fatigues the attention, and conveys our ſentiments with diſadvantage to the reader or hearer.

It would appear, however, that Ariſtotle wrote in this manner from choice rather than neceſſity. Had he preferred a more ornamental ſtyle, he could undoubtedly have attained it. It is even the opinion of ſome learned men, that if we may judge from the ſpecimen which ſtill remains,* he was fitted by nature to excel in the higher ſpecies of poetry. Scaliger regards his *Hymn to Virtue* as not inferior to the compoſitions of Pindar.†

Dr. Swift may be placed at the head of thoſe who have employed the plain ſtyle. Few writers have diſcovered greater talents. He always ſhows himſelf completely maſter of the ſubject of which he treats. Few were better acquainted with the extent, the purity, the preciſion of the Engliſh language: and therefore, to thoſe who are ambitious of attaining a pure and correct ſtyle, he is one of the moſt uſeful models. But we muſt not look for much ornament or grace in his language. His haughty and morоſe genius made him deſpiſe any embelliſhment of that kind as beneath his dignity. He delivers his ſentiments in a plain, poſitive manner, like

* Apud Athenæum, lib. xv. chap. 16, Stobœum, prope init. et Diogenem Laertium in vita Ariſtotelis.

† Scaligeri Poetices, lib. i. cap. 44.

one who is sure he is always right, and is very indifferent whether his reader is pleased or not. His sentences are often negligently arranged; the sense is sufficiently obvious; but little regard is paid to compactness or elegance. If a metaphor, or any other figure, chanced to render his satire more poignant, he would perhaps condescend to adopt it, when it presented itself; but if it tended only to embellish or illustrate, he would rather throw it aside. "Hence, in his serious writings, his style often borders upon the dry and unpleasing. But in his humorous pieces, the plainness of his manner displays his wit to the greatest advantage.

Dr. Johnson has commented on the style and manner of Swift with his usual powers of description. "In his works," says he, "he has given very different specimens both of sentiments and expression. His "Tale of a Tub" has little resemblance to his other pieces. It exhibits a vehemence and rapidity of mind, a copiousness of images, and vivacity of diction, such as he afterwards never possessed, or never exerted. It is of a mode so distinct and peculiar, that it must be considered of itself; what is true of that, is not true of any thing else which he has writtin.

'In his other works is found an equable tenour of easy language, which rather trickles than flows. His delight was in simplicity. That he has in his works no metaphor, as has been said, is not true: but his few metaphors seem to be received rather by necessity than choice. He studied purity; and though perhaps all his structures are not exact, yet it is not often that solecisms can be found; and whoever depends on his authority may generally conclude himself safe. His sentences are never too much dilated or contracted; and it will not be easy to find any embarrassment in the complication of his clauses, any inconsequence in his connections, or abruptness in his transitions.

"His style was well suited to his thoughts, which are never subtilized by nice disquisitions, decorated by sparkling conceits, elevated by ambitious sentences, or variagated by far-sought learning. He pays no court to the passions; he excites neither surprise nor admiration; he always understands himself; and his readers always understand him: the peruser of Swift wants little previous knowledge; it will be sufficient that he is acquainted with common words

and common things; he is neither required to mount elevations, nor to explore profundities; his paſſage is always on a level, along ſolid ground, without aſperities, without obſtruction.

"This eaſy and ſafe conveyance of meaning it was Swift's deſire to attain, and for having attained it he deſerves praiſe, though perhaps not the higheſt praiſe. For purpoſes merely didactick, when ſomething is to be told that was not known before, it is the beſt mode; but againſt that inattention by which known truths are ſuffered to lie neglected, it makes no proviſion; it inſtructs but does not perſuade."*

It will now be proper to ſelect a paſſage characteriſtic of that ſpecies of ſtyle of which we have been treating. And for this purpoſe, we ſhall have recourſe to the writings of Swift.

I ſuppoſe it will be granted, that hardly one in a hundred among our people of quality, or gentry, appears to act by any principle of religion. That great numbers of them do entirely diſcard it, and are ready to own their diſbelief of all revelation in ordinary diſcourſe. Nor is the caſe much better among the vulgar, eſpecially in great towns; where the prophaneneſs and ignorance of handicraftſmen, ſmall traders, ſervants, and the like, are to a degree very hard to be imagined greater. Then, it is obſerved abroad, that no race of mortals hath ſo little ſenſe of religion as the Engliſh ſoldiers: to confirm which, I have been often told by great officers in the army, that in the whole compaſs of their acquaintance, they could not recollect three of their profeſſion, who ſeem to regard or believe, one ſyllable of the Goſpel: and the ſame, at leaſt, may be affirmed of the fleet. The conſequences of all which, upon the actions of men, are equally manifeſt. They never go about, as in former times, to hide or palliate their vices; but expoſe them freely to view, like any other common occurrences of life, without the leaſt reproach from the world, or themſelves. For inſtance, any man will tell you, he intends to be drunk this evening, or was ſo laſt night, with as little ceremony or ſcruple, as he would tell you the time of the day. He will let you know that he is going to a wench, with as much indifferency as he would tell you a piece of public news. He

* Johnſon's Life of Swift.

will swear, curse, or blaspheme, without the least passion or provocation. And, although all regard for reputation be not quite laid aside in the other sex; it is however, at so low an ebb, that very few among them seem to think virtue and conduct of any necessity for preserving it. If this be not so, how comes it to pass, that women of tainted reputations find the same countenance and reception in all public places, with those of the nicest virtue, who pay and receive visits from them, without any manner of scruple? Which proceeding, as it is not very old among us, so I take it to be of the most pernicious consequence. It looks like a sort of compounding between Virtue and Vice; as if a woman were allowed to be vicious, provided she be not profligate; as if there were a certain point where gallantry ends, and infamy begins; or that an hundred criminal amours were not as pardonable as half a score. *Swift on the Advancement of Religion.*

CHAP. XXII.

OF THE NEAT STYLE.

NEATNESS of style implies a certain degree of ornament. Its ornaments, however, are not of the most showy or brilliant kind: they are such as are easily attained.

A writer who employs this kind of style, considers the beauties of language as an object worthy of attention. He is careful in the choice of his words, and endeavours to arrange them with propriety and elegance; but he seldom attempts any bold flight of eloquence. His sentences are free from the incumbrances of superfluous words; they are of a moderate length, and rather inclining to brevity than to a swelling structure; they generally close with propriety, and are unincumbered with *long tails*. His cadence is varied; but not of the studied musical kind. Such figures as he employs, are short and correct, rather than bold or glowing.

This style may perhaps be adopted by an author of superior genius; but it is not unattainable by one of no uncommon capacity. Any writer of ordinary attainments may ac-

quire it, by carefully attending to the laws of rhetoric, and to the practice of writers of eſtabliſhed reputation. It is a mode of writing that never becomes diſagreeable. It imprints a character of moderate elevation on our compoſition, and diſplays a decent degree of ornament, which is not incompatible with any ſubject whatever. A familiar letter, or a law paper may be written with neatneſs; and a ſermon or philoſophical treatiſe, in a neat ſtyle will be read with pleaſure.

The writings of Middleton, Berkeley, and Smith, appear to me to afford finiſhed models of this ſpecies of ſtyle. From the laſt of theſe authors I ſhall ſelect an appoſite paſſage:

We ſympathiſe even with the dead, and overlooking what is of real importance in their ſituation, that awful futurity which awaits them, we are chiefly affected by thoſe circumſtances which ſtrike our ſenſes, but can have no influence upon their happineſs. It is miſerable, we think, to be deprived of the light of the ſun; to be ſhut out from life and converſation; to be laid in the cold grave a prey to corruption and the reptiles of the earth; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be obliterated in a little time from the affections and almoſt the memory of their deareſt friends and relations. Surely, we imagine, we can never feel too much for thoſe who have ſuffered ſo dreadful a calamity. The tribute of our fellow feelings ſeems doubly due to them now when they are in danger of being forgot by every body: and, by the vain honours which we pay to their memory, we endeavour, for our own miſery, artificially to keep alive our melancholy remembrance of their misfortune. That our ſympathy can afford them no conſolation ſeems to be an addition to their calamity; and to think that all we can do is unavailing, and that, what alleviates all other diſtreſs, the regret, the love, and the lamentations of their friends, can yield no comfort to them, ſerves only to exaſperate the ſenſe of their miſery. The happineſs of the dead, however, moſt aſſuredly is affected by none of theſe circumſtances: nor is it the thought of theſe things which can ever diſturb the profound ſecurity of their repoſe. The idea of that dreary and endleſs melancholy which the fancy naturally aſcribes to their condition, ariſes altogether from our joining to the change which has been produced upon them, our own conſciouſneſs of that change, from our putting ourſelves in

their situation, and from our lodging, if I may be allowed to say so, our own living souls in their inanimated bodies, and thence conceiving what would be our emotions in this case. It is from this very illusion of the imagination, that the fore-sight of our dissolution is so terrible to us, and that the idea of those circumstances, which undoubtedly can give us no pain when we are dead, makes us miserable while we are yet alive. *Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments.*

CHAP. XXIII.

OR THE GRACEFUL STYLE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the powerful effect which graceful composition produces upon the mind, it is difficult to reduce it to a definition. Where language does not supply us with proper words to express the ideas of the mind, we can only convey our sentiments in figurative terms; a defect which necessarily introduces some obscurity.

Grace in writing may be compared to that easy air which so remarkably distinguishes persons of a genteel and liberal cast. It consists not only in the particular beauty of single parts, but in the general symmetry and construction of the whole. An author may be just in his sentiments, lively in his figures, and clear in his expression; yet at the same time may be wholly a stranger to graceful composition. The several members of a discourse must be so agreeably united as mutually to reflect beauty upon each other: their arrangement must be so happily disposed as not to admit of the least interposition without manifest prejudice to the entire piece. The thoughts, the metaphors, the allusions, and the diction, should appear easy and natural, and seem to arise like so many spontaneous productions, rather than as the effects of art or labour.

Whatever, therefore, is forced or affected in the sentiments, whatever pompous or pedantic in the expression, is the very reverse of grace. Her mein is neither that of a prude, nor that of a coquette; she is regular without formality, and sprightly without being fantastical. Grace is to good writ-

ing, what a proper light is to a fine picture; it not only shews all the figures in their several proportions and relations, but shows them in the most advantageous manner.

As gentility appears in the most minute actions, and improves the most inconsiderable gesture, so grace is discovered in the placing even of a single word, or in the turn of a mere expletive. Nor is this inexpressible quality confined to one species of composition: it extends from the humble pastoral to the lofty epic; from the slightest letter to the most solemn discourse.

It is supposed, that Sir William Temple was the first writer who introduced a graceful manner into English prose.* I am rather inclined to think, that this honour is due to Cowley. The general merit of this author's essays has been acknowledged by Johnson,† Goldsmith,‡ and also, I believe, by Beattie :‖ but they have never been referred to as instances of graceful composition. They however seem entitled to this mark of distinction. His sentiments are natural, and his diction simple and unaffected. Nothing appears farfetched, or artificially constructed; and our ears are seldom or never assailed with pompous and pedantic expressions.

But wheresoever we may look for the origin of this quality, it is certainly to be found in its highest perfection in the compositions of Mr. Addison, an author whose writings will be distinguished as long as politeness and good sense find any admirers. That becoming air which Cicero esteems the criterion of fine writing, and which every reader, he says, imagines so easy to be imitated, yet will find so difficult to attain, is the prevailing characteristic of all this excellent author's performances. We may justly apply to him what Plato, in his allegorical language says of Aristophanes: the Graces, having searched all the world round for a temple in which they might for ever dwell, settled at last in the breast of Addison.

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* Melmoth's Letters of Fitzosborne, let. xxix.

† Johnson's Life of Cowley.

‡ Goldsmith's Essays, vol. iii. essay xx.

‖ Beattie on Classical Learning.

His style is thus characterised by an admirable critic. "His prose is the model of the middle style; on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not grovelling; pure without scrupulosity, and exact without elaboration; always equable, and always easy, without glowing words or pointed sentences. Addison never deviates from his track to snatch a grace; he seeks no ambitious ornaments, and tries no hazardous innovations. His page is always luminous, but never blazes in unexpected splendour.

"It was apparently his principal endeavour to avoid all harshness and severity of diction: he is therefore sometimes verbose in his transitions and connections, and sometimes descends too much to the language of conversation: yet if his language had been less idiomatical, it might have lost somewhat of its genuine Anglicism. What he attempted, he performed: he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy."*

Dryden, Pope, and Atterbury, are reckoned among the number of graceful writers: and to these we may likewise add the names of Melmoth and Hume.

As a polite writer, Hume appears to the greatest advantage in some of his philosophical essays.† His style is often possessed of uncommon grace and suavity. It must however be acknowledged that he too frequently adopts French idioms; a fault which is undoubtedly owing to his long residence on

* Johnson's Life of Addison.

† Dr. Aikin, speaking of the style of philosophical writings, makes the following observations: "Great precision in the use of words, clear arrangement of all the members of a sentence, closeness of method, strength and conciseness of expression, without harshness or obscurity, are essential to perfection in this department of writing; and if somewhat of the grace and amenity of language be added, which is not incompatible with the other requisites, the effect of conviction may be promoted, by leading on the reader pleasantly through a topic perhaps naturally dry and unalluring. I conceive Cicero and Hume to be examples of this union of every useful and agreeable quality in discussions purely philosophical."

Aikin's Letters to his Son, vol. ii. let. iv.

the Continent. But from whatever cauſe it may have originated, it certainly detracts from his merit as a writer.*

In the writings of Harris I cannot perceive thoſe Platonic graces for which they have been ſo highly extolled by Dr. Knox.† His ſtyle ſeems for the moſt part to be quite the reverſe of graceful. His combination of words is often harſh and diſagreeable: and on many occaſions, he employs Greek rather than Engliſh idioms.

In exhibiting examples of the graceful ſtyle, I ſhall have recourſe to the works of Melmoth:

I conſider a generous mind as the nobleſt work of the creation, and am perſuaded, wherever it reſides, no real merit can be wanting. It is, perhaps, the moſt ſingular of all the moral endowments: I am ſure, at leaſt, it is often imputed where it cannot juſtly be claimed. The meaneſt ſelf-love, under ſome refined diſguiſe, frequently paſſes upon uncommon obſervers for this god-like principle; and I have known many a popular action attributed to this motive, when it flowed from no higher a ſource than the ſuggeſtions of concealed vanity. Good-nature, as it hath many features in common with this virtue, is uſually miſtaken for it: the former, however, is but the effect, poſſibly, of a happy diſpoſition of the animal ſtructure, or, as Dryden ſomewhere calls it, of a certain "milkineſs of blood:" whereas the latter is ſeated in the mind, and can never ſubſiſt where good ſenſe and enlarged ſentiments have no exiſtence. It is entirely founded, indeed, upon juſtneſs of thought, which, perhaps, is the reaſon this virtue is ſo little the characteriſtic of mankind in general. A man whoſe mind is warped by the ſelfiſh paſſions or contracted by the narrow prejudices of ſects or parties, if he does not want honeſty, muſt undoubtedly want underſtanding. The ſame clouds that darken his intellectual views, obſtruct his moral ones; and his generoſity is extremely circumſcribed, becauſe his reaſon is exceedingly limited.

* Hume was remarkable for his facility of compoſition. The M.SS. of ſome of the laſt volumes of his *History of England* never underwent tranſcription. He ſent them to the preſs after having made a few marginal corrections.
(Stewart's *Life of Smith*.)

† Knox's Eſſays, No. cxxvi.

True generosity rises above the ordinary rules of social conduct, and flows with much too full a stream to be comprehended within the precise marks of formal precepts. It is a vigorous principle in the soul, which opens and expands all her virtues far beyond those which are only the forced and unnatural productions of a timid obedience. The man who is influenced singly by motives of the latter kind, aims no higher than at certain authoritive standards; without even attempting to reach those glorious elevations, which constitute the only true heroism of the social character. Religion without this sovereign principle, degenerates into a slavish fear, and wisdom into a specious cunning; learning is but the avarice of the mind, and wit its more pleasing kind of madness. In a word, generosity sanctifies every passion, and adds grace to every acquisition of the soul; and if it does not necessarily include, at least it reflects a lustre upon the whole circle of moral and intellectual qualities.

Melmoth's Letters of Fitzosborne.

CHAP. XXIII.

OF THE FLORID STYLE.

QUINCTILIAN regards it as a favourable presage in juvenile writers, that their compositions display a redundancy of fancy.* We must however beware of mistaking pomp of expression for luxuriance of imagination. The for-

* Audeat hæc ætas plura, et inveniat, et inventis audeat, sint licet illa non satis interim sicca et severa. Facile remedium est ubertatis; sterilia nullo labore vincuntur. Illa mihi in pueris natura minimum spei dabit, in quâ ingenium judicio præsumitur. Materiam esse primum volo vel abundantiorem, atque ultra quam oporteat fusam. Multum inde decoquent anni, multum ratio limabit, aliquid velut usu ipso deteretur, sit modo unde excidi possit, et quod exculpi; erit autem, si non ab initiio tenuem nimium laminam euxerimus, et quam ceratura altior rumpat. Quod me de his ætatibus sentire minus

mer is of eaſy acceſs, but the latter is more rarely to be found. It is in the power of every one to load his ſtyle with high-ſounding words and phraſes; but to embelliſh a diſcourſe with the glowing colours of fancy, requires the aid of inventive genius.

A certain degree of chaſte ornament can never be unſeaſonable; though gaudy and meretricious ornaments are always diſguſting. The over-florid ſtyle, therefore, cannot be agreeable to a reader of taſte. Although it may be allowed to youth in their firſt eſſays, it muſt not receive the ſame indulgence when employed by writers of maturer years. We may reaſonably expect, that judgment, as it ripens, ſhould chaſten imagination, and reject as juvenile all ſuch ornaments as are redundant or unſuitable. Nothing can be more contemptible than that tinſel ſplendour of language which ſome writers perpetually affect. It were well if this could be aſcribed to the overflowings of a rich imagination; for, in that caſe, we ſhould at leaſt find ſomething to amuſe our fancy, if we found nothing to inſtruct our underſtanding. But it is luxuriancy of words, not of thought, that is exhibited by theſe frothy writers. We ſee a laboured attempt to riſe to a ſplendour of compoſition, of which they have formed ſome kind of looſe idea. But not poſſeſſing ſufficient ſtrength of genius to attain the deſired object, they endeavour to ſupply the defect by the uſe of poetical words, cold exclamations, and common-place figures. While they are ſo ſolicitous about every thing which has the appearance of pomp and magnificence, it has eſcaped theſe writers, that ſobriety in ornament is one great ſecret for rendering it pleaſing; and that, without a foundation of good ſenſe and ſolid thought, the moſt florid ſtyle is but a childiſh impoſition on the public. The public, however, are but too apt to be impoſed on in this manner. I cannot help thinking, that it reflects more honour on the religious and benevolent diſpoſition of the preſent age, than on the refinement of its taſte, that the works of Mr. Hervey have been ſo generally admired. The pious and benevolent heart which is always diſplayed in them, and the lively fancy which appears on ſome occaſions, juſtly merit applauſe: but the per-

mirabitur, qui apud Ciceronem legerit, *Volo enim ſe efferat in adoleſcenti facunditas.*

Quinctilian de Inſtitut. Orator. lib. ii. cap. iv.

petual glitter of expreſſion, the ſwoln imagery, and ſtrained deſcription, with which they abound, are ornaments of a falſe kind. The following paſſage may be produced as a ſpecimen:

It was early in a ſummer morning, when the air was cool the earth moiſt, the whole face of the creation freſh and gay. The noiſy world was ſcarce awake. Buſineſs had not quite ſhook off his ſound ſleep, and Riot had but juſt reclined his giddy head. All was ſerene; all was ſtill; every thing tended to inſpire tranquillity of mind, and invite to ſerious thought.

Only the wakeful lark had left her neſt, and was mounting on high, to ſalute the opening day. Elevated in air, ſhe ſeemed to call the laborious huſbandman to his toil, and her fellow ſongſters to their notes—Earlieſt of birds, ſaid I, companion of the dawn, may I always riſe at thy voice! riſe to offer the matin-ſong, and adore that beneficent Being "who maketh the out-goings of the morning and evening to rejoice."

How charming to rove abroad, at this ſweet hour of prime! to enjoy the calm of nature, to tread the dewy lawns, and taſte the unrifled freſhneſs of the air!

The greyneſs of the dawn decays gradually. Abundance of ruddy ſtreaks tinge the fleeces of the firmament; 'till, at length, the dappled aſpect of the Eaſt is loſt in one ardent and boundleſs bluſh.——Is it the ſurmiſe of imagination, or do the ſkies really redden with ſhame, to ſee ſo many ſupinely ſtretched on their drowſy pillows?

Hervey's Reflections on a Flower-Garden.

This paſſage is rendered ridiculous by being unneceſſarily loaded with the triteſt epithets of poetry. All the writings of this author are nearly in the ſame ſtrain.

There is a certain degree of elevation, to which proſe may be permitted to riſe. Its elevation, however, muſt not be perpetual; when a writer affects unvaried magnificence, it is probable that his reader will at length be ſeized with ſatiety. Ornament looſes its effect when every page is crowded with embelliſhments.

In the following beautiful paſſage, we diſcover none of thoſe improprieties which appear in that quoted above. It diſcovers an elevation of ſentiment, free from all puerility of language.

There is a kind of voice that ſpeaks through the univerſe. The language of nature is that of delight; and even the parts incapable of admitting this delight, have yet the means of imparting it. Behold the ſun! The luſtre which it ſpreads, and the beauties which it enables you to diſcover, kindle your admiration. The Indian views it with rapture. He feels gratitude for its bounty. He addreſſes the God of fire with hymns of praiſe, and ſongs of triumph. But in vain ſhould he attempt to make that ſun ſhare his gratifications. The orb of day is uninfluenced by his expreſſions of adoration. It heeds no proteſtations; it feels no emotions: but that orb adminiſters to the comfort of the devotee, and conveys animation and chearfulneſs to millions.

The ſtructure of the heavens manifeſt ſuch deſign, and wiſdom, that ſome of the ancient philoſophers ſuppoſed man born only to view and admire them. The bounty diſplayed in this earth, equals the grandeur conſpicuous in the heavens. There is no region in which the volume of inſtruction is not unfolded. In every climate is found proper food for the ſupport of the inhabitants, and proper medicines for the removal of their diſeaſes. And ſhould every age even change its food and its diſeaſes, there would ſtill be found in the world ſufficient for the inhabitants. So bountiful and provident is nature! The diſtribution of oceans, ſeas, and rivers; the variety of fields, meadows and groves; the luxuriance of fruits, herbs and flowers; the return of ſpring, ſummer, autumn, and winter, not only regular in their approaches, but bringing with them preſents, to make their return deſirable; the pleaſing viciſſitudes of day and night; all have a voice, which by telling man, he is conſtantly receiving favours, reminds him he ſhould be ready to beſtow them. *Dyer's Diſſertation on Benevolence.*

This paſſage expreſſes elevated notions in elevated language. It does not, like the one lately quoted, contain any thing ridiculous or diſguſting. *The orb of day* is the only expreſſion which approaches to puerility: but it is evidently introduced to avoid repetition.

There is one ſpecies of writing in which the florid ſtyle may be employed with propriety; I mean the oriental tale. This kind of compoſition poſſeſſes many charms, when finiſhed with a maſterly hand. And accordingly it has always been very popular from the time of its introduction into

Europe. In France it was at one time cultivated with particular attention; though the oriental tales that obtained a currency in that country, had often very little to recommend them.

Enſuite vinrent de Syrie
Volumes de contes ſans fin
Où l'on avoit mis à deſſein
L'oriental allégorie,
Les enigmes, et le genié
Du Talmudiſte, et du Rabbin,
Et ce bon goût de leur patrie
Qui loin de perdre en chemin,
Parut, ſortant de chez Barbin,
Plus Arabe qu'en Arabie. *Hamilton.*

Engliſh literature can boaſt of ſeveral beautiful compoſitions of this kind. It will be ſufficient to mention Johnſon's *Raſſelas*, Hawkſworth's *Almoran and Hamet*, and Langhorne's *Solyman and Almena*, together with the various tales which occur in the *Spectator*, *Rambler*, and *Adventurer*.

Although the oriental tale admits the florid ſtyle, yet every page muſt not be highly ornamented. The mind is apt to be dazzled by too much ſplendour: and where all is magnificent, we become ſick of admiration.

CHAP. XXIV.

OF THE SIMPLE AND THE AFFECTED STYLE.

SIMPLICITY, applied to writing, is a term very frequently uſed; but, like other critical terms, it is often uſed in a very looſe and vague manner. This circumſtance has chiefly ariſen from the variety of meanings attached to the word. It will therefore be neceſſary to diſtinguiſh theſe different ſignifications; and to ſhew in what ſenſe the term is properly applicable to ſtyle. We may remark four different acceptations in which it is taken.

The firſt is ſimplicity of compoſition, as oppoſed to a great variety of parts. This is the ſimplicity of plan in

dramatic or epic poetry, as diſtinguiſhed from double plots, and crowded incidents. Thus we term the plan of Home's *Douglas* ſimple, and that of Dryden's *Spaniſh Fryar* complicated. We ſpeak of the ſimplicity of Homer's *Iliad*, in oppoſition to the digreſſions of Lucan's *Pharſalia*. In this ſenſe, ſimplicity is the ſame with unity.

The ſecond ſenſe is ſimplicity of thought, as oppoſed to refinement. Simple thoughts are what ariſe naturally, what the ſubject or the occaſion ſuggeſts unſought, and what when once ſuggeſted, are eaſily apprehended by all. Refinement in writing expreſſes a leſs natural and obvious train of thought, which it requires a peculiar bent of genius to purſue. Thus we ſay, that Parnell and Goldſmith exhibit greater ſimplicity of thought than Cowley and Donne: Cicero's thoughts on moral ſubjects are natural: Seneca's too refined and far-fetched. In theſe two ſenſes of ſimplicity, when it is oppoſed either to variety of parts, or to refinement of thought, it bears no proper relation to ſtyle.

In the third place, ſimplicity ſtands oppoſed to ſuperfluous ornament, or pomp of language. Thus Jortin is termed a ſimple, and Hervey a florid writer. The ſimple ſtyle, in this ſenſe, coincides with the plain or with the neat ſtyle, which, as it has been already treated of, requires no farther illuſtration.

There is alſo another ſignification attached to the term ſimplicity. This does not refer to the degree of ornament employed, ſo much as to the eaſy and natural manner in which our language expreſſes our thoughts. In this ſenſe, ſimplicity is compatible with the higheſt ornament. It ſtands oppoſed, not to ornament, but to affectation. Thus Homer poſſeſſes this kind of ſimplicity in the greateſt perfection; and yet no poet has more ornament and beauty.

A graceful ſimplicity of ſtyle ſeems to be of eaſy attainment; though in practice the matter is found to be quite otherwiſe.* It does not appear difficult to catch the man-

* Itaque eum qui audiunt, quamvis ipſi infantes ſint, tamen illo modo confidunt ſe poſſe dicere. Nam orationis ſubtilitas imitabilis quidam illa videtur eſſe exiſtimanti, ſed nihil eſt experienti minus. *Ciceronis Orator.*

ner of Xenophon, or Addiſon; yet who has ever imitated either of them with ſucceſs?

A writer of ſimplicity expreſſes himſelf in a manner which every one thinks eaſy to be attained. There are no marks of art in his expreſſion; it ſeems the very language of nature: you ſee in the ſtyle, not the writer and his labour, but the man in his own natural character. He may be rich in his expreſſion; he may avail himſelf of the beauties of figurative language,

Or of the forms which Fancy doth inrol.

Davies.

Still, however, every thing ſeems to flow from him without effort; and he appears to write in this manner, not becauſe he has ſtudied it, but becauſe it is moſt natural to him. Yet it muſt not be imagined, that a ſtyle of this kind is to be attained without ſtudy. To conceal its own efforts, is ſaid to be the perfection of art: and when we find an author's ſtyle characterized by a beautiful ſimplicity, we may conclude that this is the effect of natural ingenuity aided by an aſſiduous attention to the rules of compoſition.

It is the opinion of ſome critics, that a certain degree of negligence is not ungraceful in this kind of ſtyle. "Let it poſſeſs," ſays Cicero—"let it poſſeſs ſomewhat of ſoftneſs and eaſe, that may indicate a ſpecies of negligence, not unpleaſing in an author who appears more ſolicitous about the thought than the expreſſion."* *Molle quiddam*, ſomewhat of ſoftneſs and eaſe, is undoubtedly conſiſtent with grace and ſimplicity: but how any ſpecies of negligence ſhould have the good fortune to be regarded as ornamental, it is not altogether eaſy to conceive. The ſtyle of ſome authors who are chargeable with frequent negligences, may be highly agreeable: but it is agreeable becauſe its intrinſic beauties are more than ſufficient to compenſate for theſe inſtances of neglect. An author, it is true, ought always to be more ſolicitous about ſentiments than language: yet the utmoſt attention to the former is not incompatible with a high degree of attention to the latter.

Reading an author of ſimplicity, is like maintaining familiar converſation with a perſon of diſtinction, who lays

* Ciceronis Orator.

open his ſentiments without affectation or diſguiſe. But a mode of writing which ſeems artificial and elaborate, has always this diſadvantage, that it exhibits an author in form, like a man at court, where the ſplendour of dreſs, and the ceremonial of behaviour, conceal thoſe peculiarities which diſtinguiſh one perſon from another.

The ancients are more remarkable for ſimplicity than the moderns. The reaſon is obvious. The former wrote from the dictates of natural genius, and did not endeavour to model their compoſitions according to thoſe of others.—When an author attempts this, he is always in danger of running into affectation. The more early Greek writers had no models to imitate; and accordingly they ſurpaſs thoſe of every other learned nation in point of beautiful ſimplicity. This quality is highly conſpicuous in the writings of Homer, Heſiod, Anacreon, Theocritus, Herodotus, and Xenophon. Rome can alſo boaſt of ſeveral writers of this deſcription; particularly Terence, Lucretius, and Cæſar.

In the catalogue of Engliſh authors, there are ſeveral diſtinguiſhed for a becoming ſimplicity of manner. Although Dr. Tillotſon cannot be recommended as an elegant and poliſhed writer, yet his ſtyle is remarkably ſimple and unaffected. It has already been obſerved, that he has no pretenſions to genuine eloquence, if that term be underſtood to include vehemence and ſtrength of expreſſion, the beauties of figurative language, and the correct and harmonious arrangement of ſentences. His real merit, however, muſt not be overlooked. A conſtant vein of piety and good ſenſe runs through all his works. His manner is earneſt and ſerious; and ſo much uſeful inſtruction is conveyed in a natural ſtyle, that his works can never be ſuffered to fall into diſrepute.—They will be held in eſtimation as long as the Engliſh language is underſtood: not, indeed, as models of eloquence, but as the productions of an amiable writer whoſe manner is ſtrongly expreſſive of his innate goodneſs of heart. "There is," ſays Dr. Goldſmith, "nothing peculiar to the language of Archbiſhop Tillotſon, but his manner of writing is inimitable; for one who reads him wonders why he himſelf did not think and ſpeak in that very manner. The turn of his periods is agreeable, though artleſs; and every thing he ſays ſeems to flow ſpontaneouſly from inward conviction."*

* Goldſmith's Eſſays, vol. iii. eſſay xx.

Sir William Temple is alſo remarkable for ſimpliciſty of ſtyle. In point of ornament and correctneſs, he riſes a degree above Dr. Tillotſon; though for the latter quality he is by no means remarkable. His language is chiefly diſtinguiſhed by his ſmoothneſs and amenity. He not unfrequently becomes prolix and careleſs; yet he ſeldom fatigues the attention of his reader. No writer whatever has ſtamped upon his ſtyle a more lively impreſſion of his own character. In reading his works, we ſeem engaged in converſation with him; we become thoroughly acquainted with him, not merely as an author, but as a man. With an author of this character we contract a kind of friendſhip.

It has been confidently aſſerted, that Temple was a man of no learning. Thoſe who entertain this opinion ought to beſtow a ſecond peruſal upon his works; which certainly indicate, that their author was not deficient either in ſcholaſtic attainments, or in knowledge of the world. He ſeems to have been ſkilled in the polite languages both of ancient and modern times, and to have poſſeſſed a general knowledge in the differeht departments of elegant literature. Perhaps he was not much verſed in ſcience; though it is not to be preſumed that he was unacquainted with its moſt important branches. In proof of theſe aſſertions I need only refer to his eſſays on Poetry, on Heroic Virtue, and on Ancient and Modern Learning.

Of the moſt correct and ornamented degree of the ſimple manner, Mr. Addiſon undoubtedly exhibits the moſt perfect example. In figurative language he is extremely rich; particularly in ſimiles and metaphors; which are ſo employed as to render his ſtyle ſplendid without being gaudy: There is not the leaſt affectation in his manner; we ſee no marks of labour, nothing forced or conſtrained. Great elegance is every where joined with great eaſe and ſimplicity. He is, in particular, diſtinguiſhed by a character of modeſty and politeneſs, which appears in all his writings. No author has a more popular and inſinuating manner. His works are alſo recommended by the great regard which he conſtantly ſhows for virtue and religion. With a liberal hand he every where ſcatters

The flow'rs of fiction, and the gems of truth.*

* Thompſon's Pictures of Poetry.

The literary merit of Dr. Goldſmith ſeems to bear ſome analogy to that of Mr. Addiſon. His diction is correct and elegant, and at the ſame time free from every ſpecies of affectation. His language flows from him without perceptible effort; yet it is always ſuch as it would be difficult to improve. The claſſical eaſe of his manner has ſeldom been equalled. He has exerted his talents upon a great variety of ſubjects; and on whatever ſubject he happens to write he is always read with pleaſure. His *Eſſays*, *Life of Parnell*, *Citizen of the World*, and *Vicar of Wakefield*, are compoſitions ſufficient to have eſtabliſhed the reputation of any writer. His reputation, however, does not altogether depend upon theſe productions; it is alſo ſupported by the merit of his dramatic and poetical works.

Dr. Johnſon has very juſtly characterized Goldſmith as "a man of ſuch variety of powers, and ſuch felicity of performance, that he always ſeemed to do beſt that which he was doing; a man who had the art of being minute without tediouſneſs, and general without confuſion; whoſe language was copious without exuberance, exact without conſtraint, and eaſy without weakneſs."*

Sterne is generally mentioned as a writer of great ſimplicity of ſtyle: but he does not appear worthy of being claſſed under the preſent head. His ſimplicity is not of the moſt graceful and elegant character. Yet his works do undoubtedly furniſh examples of a ſtyle at once ſimple and ornamented. In ſupport of this aſſertion, I ſhall venture to produce the following paſſage; which, though not altogether faultleſs, ſeems highly beautiful:

Maria, though not tall, was nevertheleſs of the firſt order of fine forms. Affliction had touched her looks with ſomething that was ſcarce earthly. Still ſhe was feminine; and ſo much was there about her of all that the heart wiſhes, or the eye looks for in woman, that, could the traces be ever worn out of her brain, and thoſe of Eliza's out of mine, ſhe ſhould not only eat of my bread, and drink of my cup, but Maria ſhould lie in my boſom, and be unto me as a daughter.

Adieu, poor luckleſs maiden! Imbibe the oil and wine, which the compaſſion of a ſtranger, as he journeyeth on his

* Johnſon's Life of Parnell.

way, now pours into thy wounds. The being who has twice bruised thee, can only bind them up for ever.

Sterne's Sentimental Journey.

It is to be lamented, that this author should ever have employed his talents in recommending a system of refined libertinism. It is also to be lamented, that he who could so exquisitely delineate the pleasures of general benevolence, should have been found notoriously deficient in the common duties of humanity.

In the preface to his *Sermons*, he wishes to persuade his reader, that they rather flow from the heart than from the head. If this is the case, they must be most execrable productions; for his heart was hard and unfeeling. "What is called sentimental writing," says Walpole, "though it be understood to appeal solely to the heart, may be the product of a bad one. One would imagine that Sterne had been a man of a very tender heart—yet I know from indubitable authority, that his mother who kept a school, having run in debt, on account of an extravagant daughter, would have rotted in jail, if the parents of her scholars had not raised a subscription for her. Her son had too much sentiment to have any feeling. A dead ass was more important to him than a living mother."* Yet this is the man who inculcates the principles of universal philanthrophy; the man who pretends to extend his benevolent views to the happiness of the very fly that accident may expose to the rude hand of violence.

That Sterne possessed the power of moving the passions, must certainly be admitted. The episodes of Le Fevre and Maria are eminently pathetic. But it may be disputed whether he possessed all that wit and humour for which the courtesy of some readers has given him credit. If obscenity be wit, and quaint obscurity humour, he is infinitely superior to Butler or Cervantes. But if it should appear that contemptible obscenity is within the reach of the poorest pretender to genius, and that to plunge into the depth of obscurity, requires nothing more than a confused brain, Sterne will no longer be regarded as a writer of the greatest originality. Upon the first appearance of *Tristram Shandy*, his readers were confounded at the strange farrago of whim, impudence,

* Walpoliana, vol. i.

and extravagance, which that work exhibited. The majority were at a loss what judgment to form concerning its merit, till a few who pretended to comprehend his meaning, gave the signal to admire. Adventitious circumstances have too long contributed to impose it upon the public as a work of transcendent ingenuity. The reputation which was founded on ignorance, has been supported by folly and caprice.

Of an author who has rendered his style much less beautiful by want of simplicity, I cannot point out a more remarkable instance than Lord Shaftesbury. It has already been hinted that he is a writer in whom some beauties are blended with many deformities. His language is rich and musical: but he seems to have considered it as beneath the dignity of one of his rank, to speak like the rest of mankind. Hence he is ever in buskins; and arrayed in pomp and magnificence. In every sentence we discern evident marks of art and labour. We perceive nothing of that ease which accompanies the expression of a sentiment proceeding warm from the heart. In the use of figures and ornament of every description, he shows sufficient skill; but his fondness for them is too visible. Having once found a metaphor which pleases his fancy, he knows not how to lay it aside; but often pursues it until it becomes quite disgusting and ridiculous.

What appears very surprising, Shaftesbury was a professed admirer of simplicity. He is always extolling it in the ancients; and at the same censuring the moderns for their affectation, and *rawness of fancy*.

He possessed a false refinement of taste without any warmth of passion, or vivacity of feeling. The coldness of his character led him to that artificial and stately manner which appears in all his writings. He seems highly fond of wit and raillery; which he attempts to promote, but with very little success. His wit is always blunt, and his raillery stiff and awkward.

Dr. Berkely has justly ridiculed this pretended rival of Plato, for his affectation and self-importance. In one of his Dialogues, a speaker produces the book entitled *Advice to an Author*, and reads a brilliant passage from it in a declamatory tone, adjusting all the pauses as if he had been reciting a poem in heroic verse. After he has finished his declamation, the dialogue proceeds in the following manner: "Euphranor, having heard thus far, cried out: What! will you

never have done with your poetry? another time may ſerve: but why ſhould we break off our conference to read a play? You are miſtaken, it is no play nor poetry, replied Alciphron, but a famous modern critic moralizing in proſe. You muſt know this great man hath (to uſe his own words) revealed a Grand Arcanum to the world, having inſtructed mankind in what he calls mirrour-writing, ſelf-diſcourſing practice, and ſhew'd 'That by virtue of an intimate receſs, we may diſcover a certain duplicity of ſoul, and divide ourſelves into two parties, or (as he varies the phraſe) practically from the dual number.' In conſequence whereof he has found that a man may argue with himſelf: and not only with himſelf, but alſo with notions, ſentiments, and vices, which by a marvellous proſopopœia, he converts into ſo many ladies; and ſo converted, he confutes and confounds them in a divine ſtrain. Can any thing be finer, bolder, or more ſublime? EUPH. It is very wonderful. I thought indeed you had been reading a tragedy. Is this he who deſpiſeth our Univerſities, and ſets up for reforming the ſtyle and taſte of the age? ALC. The very ſame. This is the admired critic of our times. Nothing can ſtand the teſt of his correct judgment, which is equally ſevere to poets and parſons."*

The philoſophy of Shafteſbury, as well as his ſtyle, has found its admirers. His writings, if we may credit Dr. Hutcheſon, will be eſteemed while any reflection remains among men.† There is ſome probability, however, that this prediction will not be verified. In the opinion of very competent judges, his philoſophy is but ſuperficial. Indeed ſome enquirers are at a loſs how to account for his ever having been regarded as a philoſophical writer that merited any degree of notice. But Gray has explained this circumſtance in a very ſatisfactory manner.‡

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* Berkeley's Minute Philoſopher, dial. v.

† Hutcheſon's Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, pref.

‡ You ſay you cannot conceive how Lord Shafteſbury came to be a philoſopher in vogue; I will tell you; firſt, he was a lord; ſecondly, he was as vain as any of his readers; thirdly, men are very prone to believe what they do not underſtand; fourthly, they will believe any thing at all, provided they are under no obligation to believe it; fifthly, they love

From the account which has been given of Shaftesbury's manner, it may easily be imagined, that he would mislead those who blindly admired him. We have one remarkable exemplification in Dr. Blackwell, an author well known for his *Life of Homer*, *Letters on Mythology*, and *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus*. He discovers considerable ingenuity and learning; but is infected with an extravagant love of the artificial style, and of that parade of language which distinguishes the Shaftesburean manner.

Beside those general characters of style which have already been pointed out, several others might perhaps be mentioned. Conceited writers, for instance, discover their spirit so much in their composition, that it imprints on their style a character of pertness; though I confess it is difficult to determine whether this can be classed among the attributes of style, or is rather to be ascribed entirely to the thought. But to whatever class we refer it, all appearances of it ought to be avoided with care, as a most disgusting blemish in writing.

From the observations which have been suggested, it may be inferred, that to determine among all these different manners of writing, which is positively preferable, is neither easy nor necessary. Style is a field that admits of great latitude. Its qualities in different authors may be very different; and yet in them all beautiful. Room must be left here for genius; for that particular determination which every one receives from Nature to one manner of expression more than another. Some general qualities indeed there are of such importance, that they should always, in every kind of composition, be kept in view; and some defects which we should always study to avoid. An ostentatious, a feeble, a harsh, or an obscure style, for example, can never be adopted with propriety; and perspicuity, strength, neatness, and simplicity, are beauties which ought always to be studied. But with re-

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to take a new road, even when that road leads no where; sixthly, he was reckoned a fine writer, and seems always to mean more than he said. Would you have any more reasons? An interval of above forty years has pretty well destroyed the charm. A dead lord ranks with commoners: vanity is no longer interested in the matter; for a new road is become an old one. *Gray's Letters.*

gard to the mixture of all, or the degree of predominancy to be allowed to any one of these good qualities, in forming our peculiarly distinctive manner, no precise rules can be given; nor shall I venture to point out any one model as absolutely perfect.

CHAP. XXV.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF A PASSAGE IN THE WRITINGS OF ADDISON.

HAVING insisted fully on the nature of style, I shall now descend to a critical analysis of particular passages in the writings of eminent authors. An analysis of this kind will tend further to illustrate the subject; as it will suggest observations which I have not yet had occasion to make, and will shew in the most practical light, the use of those which I have made. In the prosecution of this plan, I shall use all possible brevity; as the mind cannot long dwell with pleasure upon minute objects.

As we proceed it must always be remembered that the general character of an author's style cannot be properly estimated by some particular passage of his writings.

"As a perfect tragedy is the noblest production of human nature, so it is capable of giving the mind one of the most delightful and most improving entertainments."

This is an excellent introductory sentence. It is clear, precise, and simple. The first period of a discourse ought always to be of a moderate length.

The mode, however, which the participle *giving* is here employed, does not possess much dignity. *Affording* might perhaps be substituted with propriety. The different tenses of the verb *give* are often used in a manner which approaches to the colloquial or familiar style. "The Anacreontiques therefore of Cowley," says Dr. Johnson, "*give* now all the pleasure which they ever *gave*."*

* Johnson's Life of Cowley.

"A virtuous man, says Seneca, struggling with misfortunes, is such a spectacle as gods might look upon with pleasure; and such a pleasure it is which one meets with in the representation of a well-written tragedy."

The first member of this sentence is harsh and disagreeable. "Such a spectacle as gods might *behold* with pleasure," seems more harmonious.

My present business is not with the author's sentiments: it may not, however, be improper to observe, that what he advances in the sentence now quoted, can only apply to those tragedies of which the chief personages are virtuous.

"Diversions of this kind wear out of our thoughts every thing that is mean and little."

The word *diversions* cannot without manifest impropriety be taken to signify the more solemn amusements of the theatre. "*Diversion*," says Dr. Johnson, "seems to be something lighter than *amusement*, and less forcible than *pleasure*."—It has nearly the same signification with *sport*. The tragical sports of the theatre is a strange expression.

"They cherish and cultivate that humanity which is the ornament of our nature."

This metaphorical language is exceptionable. The act of cherishing and the act of cultivating bear no kind of analogy to each other; and therefore ought not to have been so intimately connected. The subject of the former must be possest of animal life; that of the latter must be brute and inert matter. With what propriety, then, can the same object be represented as cherished and cultivated?

"They soften insolence, sooth affliction, and subdue the mind to the dispensations of Providence."

This sentence is smooth and elegant.

"It is no wonder, therefore, that, in all the polite nations of the world, this part of the drama has met with public encouragement."

This sentence requires no particular consideration.

"The modern tragedy excels that of Greece and Rome in the intricacy and disposition of the fable; but what a Christian writer should be ashamed to own, falls infinitely short of it in the moral part of the performance."

It was formerly obſerved, that in the members of a ſentence where two objects were either compared or contraſted, ſome reſemblance in the language and conſtruction ſhould be preſerved. This rule is violated in the above paſſage. A ſlight alteration will, in my opinion, improve the ſentence: "The modern tragedy excels that of Greece and Rome, in the intricacy and diſpoſition of the fable; but what a Chriſtian writer ſhould be aſhamed to own, falls infinitely ſhort of it in the purity and beauty of the morality."

"This I may ſhew more at large hereafter; and in the mean time, that I may contribute ſomething towards the improvement of the Engliſh tragedy, I ſhall take notice, in this and the other following papers, of ſome particular parts in it that ſeem liable to exception."

This period is arranged with clearneſs and perſpicuity. Although in the former part of it *that* is employed as a conjunction, yet it afterwards occurs as a relative pronoun. Of this word Mr. Addiſon ſeems to have been remarkably fond. *Which* is more definitive in its ſignification than *that*, being never employed in any other way than as a relative; whereas *that* is a word of many ſenſes; ſometimes a demonſtrative pronoun, often a conjunction. In ſome caſes we are indeed obliged to uſe *that* for a relative, in order to avoid the ungraceful repetition of *which* in the ſame ſentence. But when we are under no neceſſity of this kind, *which* is generally the preferable word.

"Ariſtotle obſerves that the Iambic verſe in the Greek tongue was the moſt proper for tragedy; becauſe at the ſame time that it lifted up the diſcourſe from proſe, it was that which approached nearer to it than any other kind of verſe."

This ſentence contains a great ſuperfluity of words. The author's meaning may be expreſſed in the following manner: "Ariſtotle obſerves that the Iambic verſe in the Greek tongue was the moſt proper for tragedy; becauſe while it elevated the diſcourſe a degree above proſe, it approached nearer to it than any other kind of verſe."

"For, ſays he, we may obſerve that men in ordinary diſcourſe very often ſpeak Iambics without taking notice of it. We may make the ſame obſervation of our Engliſh

blank verse, which often enters into our common discourse, though we do not attend to it, and is such a due medium between rhime and prose, that it seems wonderfully adapted to tragedy."

In these sentences we shall find little to commend. *Taking notice of it*, is a feeble and ungraceful close, which might have been easily avoided.

In the other period the words, *which often enters into our common discourse though we do not attend to it*, are altogether superfluous. They are nothing more than the repetition of a circumstance of which we are sufficiently apprized by the application of the remark quoted in the former sentence.

"I am therefore very much offended when I see a play in rhyme; which is as absurd in English, as a tragedy of hexameters would have been in Greek or Latin."

This is a neat period.

"The solecism is, I think, still greater in those plays that have some scenes in rhyme and some in blank verse, which are to be looked upon as two separate languages; or where we see some particular similes dignified with rhyme, at the same time that every thing about them lies in blank verse. I would not however debar the poet from concluding his tragedy, or, if he pleases, every act of it, with two or three couplets, which may have the same effect as an air in the Italian Opera after a long *recitativo*, and gives the actor a graceful *exit*."

In the former of these sentences the phrase, *every thing about them lies in blank verse*, appears liable to exception. In the latter the two concluding members are not properly counterbalanced: the latter is of such disproportionate length, that the harmony is in a great measure destroyed.

"Besides, that we see a diversity of numbers in some parts of the old tragedy, in order to hinder the ear from being tired with the same continued modulation of voice."

The conjunction *that* is introduced without any propriety. By the insertion of it, this sentence instead of seeming complete, has rather the appearance of a detached member.

Why in the present instance, *old* should have been preferred to *ancient*, it is not easy to discover.

"For the same reason I do not dislike the speeches in our English tragedy that close with an *hemistich*, or half verse, notwithstanding the person who speaks after it begins a new verse, without filling up the preceding one; nor with abrupt pauses and breakings off in the middle of a verse, when they humour any passion that is expressed by it."

This sentence is devoid of correctness and elegance. To *speak after an hemistich*, is certainly a very uncouth expression. The latter part of the period has a kind of mutilated appearance. One would be led to suspect that *I am not displeased with* had formerly occupied the place of *I do not dislike*; and that when the author made the correction, he forgot to adjust the whole of the sentence. "For the same reason I am not displeased with the speeches in our English tragedy, &c. nor with the abrupt pauses and breakings off in the middle of a verse," &c.

It would perhaps have increased the smoothness of the period, without detracting from its significance, had it been permitted to close at the word *passion*.

"Since I am upon this subject, I must observe that our English poets have succeeded much better in the style than in the sentiments of their tragedies."

Since I am upon this subject I must observe that—These words, introduced without any apparent necessity, occasion slight ambiguity. While they seem to refer to what was stated in the last sentence, they in fact refer to the general subject of which the author is treating.

"The language is very often noble and sonorous, but the sense either very trifling or very common."

This sentence is perhaps capable of being improved: "Their language is often noble and sonorous, while the sense is either very trifling or very common."

"On the contrary, in the ancient tragedies, and indeed in those of Corneille and Racine, though the expressions are very great, it is the thought that bears them up and swells them. For my own part, I prefer a noble sentiment that is depressed with homely language, infinitely before a vulgar

one that is blown up with all the sound and energy of expression."

Great is an epithet which no other writer, as far as I remember, has ever applied to expressions.

The metaphorical language which occurs at the conclusion of this passage, is somewhat ludicrous. An object may be blown up with wind, but never with sound.

"Whether this defect in our tragedies may arise from want of genius, knowledge, or experience in writers, or from their compliance with the vicious taste of their readers who are better judges of the language than of the sentiments, and consequently relish the one more than the other, I cannot determine. But I believe it might rectify the conduct both of the one and of the other, if the writer laid down the whole contexture of his dialogue in plain English, before he turned it into blank verse; and if the reader, after a perusal of a scene, would consider the naked thought of every speech in it, when divested of all its tragic ornaments: by this means, without being imposed upon by words, we may judge impartially of the thought, and consider whether it be natural or *great* enough for the person that utters it, whether it deserves to shine in such a blaze of eloquence, or shew itself in such a variety of lights as are generally made use of by the writers of our English tragedy."

A great variety of circumstances is here introduced with accuracy and precision. In the second sentence we find *means* employed as a noun of the singular number; an usage which Johnson and Lowth do not explicitly approve. On the other hand Campbell and Priestley contend for its propriety; and their opinion is supported by the authority of Addison, Swift, Pope, Burke, Robertson, Goldsmith, and many other writers of eminence. It is certainly more agreeable to the general analogy of the English language, as well as to the etymology of the word, to vary it in the singular and the plural form; but our ears are too much habituated to the common practice, to relish the phrases "by this *mean*, by that *mean*."

This passage contains an error in syntax. It may be proper to say "such a variety of *lights* as *are* made use of;" but "Such a blaze of *eloquence* as *are* made use of;" is evidently ungrammatical.

"I must in the next place observe, that when our thoughts are great and just, they are often obscured by the sounding phrases, hard metaphors, and forced expressions in which they are cloathed. Shakespeare is often faulty in this particular."

This passage appears unexceptionable.

"There is a fine observation in Aristotle to this purpose, which I have never seen quoted."

Here the relative pronoun *which* refers grammatically to *purpose*, and not, as the sense of the passage requires, to *observation*. This defect might have been remedied by the following arrangement: "To this purpose there is a fine observation in Aristotle, which I have never seen quoted."

"The expression, says he, ought to be very much laboured in the unactive parts of the fable, as in descriptions, similitudes, narrations, and the like; in which the opinions, manners and passions of men are not represented; for these (namely the opinions, manners and passions) are apt to be obscured by pompous phrases and elaborate expressions.—Horace, who copied most of his opinions after Aristotle, seems to have had his eye on the foregoing rule, in the following verses:

Et tragicus plerumque dolet sermone pedestri;
Telephus et Peleus, &c."

Nothing can be more awkward than the parenthesis which is here introduced.

The last period would perhaps be rendered more correct by substituting *in composing the following verses* instead of *in the following verses*.

"Among our modern English poets, there is none who was better turned for tragedy than Lee; if instead of favouring the impetuosity of his genius, he had restrained it and kept it within its proper bounds."

The whole sentence discovers a confusion of ideas. We are first told that Lee actually possest a genius equal to that of any of our modern tragic poets; though it is afterwards insinuated that he only would have possest it, provided he had restrained it within due bounds. If a poet is naturally *turned* for tragedy, he certainly must possess that *turn* whe-

ther he ſubject his genius to the control of judgment, or allow it to produce ſuch inſtances of extravagance as are to be found in the works of Lee.

"His thoughts are wonderfully ſuited to tragedy, but frequently loſt in ſuch a cloud of words, that it is hard to ſee the beauty of them; there is an infinite fire in his works, but ſo involved in ſmoke, that it does not appear in half its luſtre. He frequently ſucceeds in the paſſionate parts of the tragedy, but more particularly where he ſlackens his efforts, and eaſes the ſtyle of thoſe epithets and metaphors, in which he ſo much abounds. What can be more natural, more ſoft, or more paſſionate, than that line in Statira's ſpeech; where ſhe deſcribes the charms of Alexander's converſation?

"Then he would talk—Good gods! how he would talk!"

The author has here expreſſed his ſentiments with felicity. The language is correct and poliſhed, and though abounding in metaphor, it is free from affectation or impropriety.

"That unexpected break in the line, and turning the deſcription of his manner of talking, into an admiration of it, is inexpreſſibly beautiful, and wonderfully ſuited to that fond character of the perſon that ſpeaks it."

As the words *wonderfully ſuited* occur in a ſentence not far diſtant from this, they ought not to have been ſo ſoon repeated. The period might have cloſed thus: "and finely adapted to the fond character of the perſon by whom it is uttered." This arrangement would remove the intruſive particle *it* from the honourable ſituation which it now maintains.

"There is a ſimplicity in the words which outſhines the utmoſt pride of expreſſion."

This ſentence poſſeſſes conſiderable beauty.

"Otway has followed nature in the language of his tragedy, and therefore ſhines in the paſſionate parts, more than any of our Engliſh poets."

The verb *ſhines* is placed too near its compound *outſhines*.

"As there is ſomething familiar and domeſtic in the fable of his tragedy, more than in thoſe of any other poet, he has little pomp, but great force in his expreſſions. For which reaſon, though he has admirably ſucceeded in the tender and

melting part of his tragedies, he ſometimes falls into too great a familiarity of phraſe in thoſe parts, which, by Ariſtotle's rule, ought to have been raiſed and ſupported by the dignity of expreſſion.

There is ſomething familiar and domeſtic in the fable of his tragedy, more than in thoſe of any other poet. As the antecedent to *thoſe* is tragedy, the ſentence is ungrammatical. Errors of this kind do not unfrequently occur in our beſt authors.

Of the four ſentences laſt quoted, three conclude with the ſubſtantive *expreſſion* either in its ſingular or its plural form.

"It has been obſerved by others, that this poet has founded his tragedy of *Venice Preſerved* on ſo wrong a plot, that the greateſt characters in it are thoſe of rebels and traitors."

The word *character*, when applied in this manner, denotes ſome perſon together with the aſſemblage of his qualities. It is improper to ſay "The greateſt perſons are the perſons of rebels and traitors;" an expreſſion to which that contained in the concluſion of the above paſſage is equivalent. The words *thoſe of* ſhould have been omitted.

"Had the hero of his play diſcovered the ſame good qualities in the defence of his country that he ſhewed for its ruin and ſubverſion, the audience could not enough pity and admire him: but as he is now repreſented, we can only ſay of him, what the Roman hiſtorian ſays of Catiline, that his fall would have been glorious *(ſi pro patria ſic concidiſſet)* had he ſo fallen in the ſervice of his country."*

This, though an agreeable ſentence, is not free from faults. The author ſpeaks of the good qualities which the hero of *Venice Preſerved* ſhews for the ruin of his country. This is certainly an attempt in which good qualities were never exhibited.

In this paſſage the words *ruin* and *ſubverſion* are both uſed, though they do not ſerve to mark any different ſhades in the idea.

* Spectator, No. 39.

CHAP. XXVI.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF A PASSAGE IN THE WRITINGS OF SWIFT.

"THE players having now almoſt done with the comedy called the *Beggar's Opera*, for the ſeaſon; it may be no unpleaſant ſpeculation, to reflect a little upon this dramatic piece, ſo ſingular in the ſubject and matter, ſo much an original, and which hath frequently given ſo very agreeable an entertainment."

This introductory ſentence is not entitled to much commendation. *The players having now almoſt done with the comedy*, is a phraſe not altogether free from vulgarity.

"Although an evil taſte be very apt to prevail, both here and in London; yet there is a point which whoever can rightly touch, will never fail of pleaſing a very great majority; ſo great, that the diſlikers out of dullneſs or affectation, will be ſilent, and forced to fall in with the herd: the point I mean, is what we call humour; which, in its perfection, is allowed to be much preferable to wit; if it be not rather the moſt uſeful, and agreeable ſpecies of it."

This ſentence, though ſufficiently perſpicuous, is certainly devoid of elegance. *There is a point which whoever can rightly touch*, is uncouth phraſeology.

"I agree with Sir William Temple, that the word is peculiar to our Engliſh tongue; but I differ from him in opinion, that the thing itſelf is peculiar to the Engliſh nation, becauſe the contrary may be found in many Spaniſh, Italian, and French productions: and particularly, whoever hath a taſte for true humour, will find an hundred inſtances of it, in thoſe volumes printed in France, under the name of *Le Theatre Italien*: to ſay nothing of Rabelais, Cervantes, and many others."

The *word* to which the author refers in the beginning of this ſentence, is *humour*: though, as he had mentioned *wit* at the cloſe of the laſt, a ſlight degree of ambiguity is occa-

ſioned. It would be more perſpicuous to ſay "The word humour is peculiar to *our* Engliſh tongue." In this clauſe, *the* ſeems more proper than *our*.

This ſentence is but unſkilfully conſtructed. The member by which it is cloſed, follows with a very halting pace. I ſhall venture to ſuggeſt a few alterations; "I agree with Sir William Temple, that the word humour is peculiar to the Engliſh tongue; but I differ from him in the opinion, that the quality which it denotes, is peculiar to the Engliſh nation. We find abundant proofs of the contrary in many Spaniſh, Italian, and French productions. Whoever hath a taſte for true humour, will find an hundred inſtances of it, in thoſe volumes printed in France under the title of *Le Theatre Italien*."

"Now I take the comedy or farce (or whatever name the critics will allow it) called the *Beggar's Opera*, to excel in this article of humour; and upon that merit to have met with ſuch prodigious ſucceſs, both here and in England."

This ſentence is very deficient in elegance.

"As to poetry, eloquence, and muſic, which are ſaid to have moſt power over the minds of men; it is certain, that very few have a taſte or judgment of the excellencies of the two former; and if a man ſucceed in either, it is upon the authority of thoſe few judges, that lend their taſte to the bulk of readers, who have none of their own. I am told, there are as few good judges in muſic; and that among thoſe who crowd the Operas, nine in ten go thither merely out of curioſity, faſhion, or affectation."

This paragraph gives occaſion to no material obſervation.

"But a taſte for humour is in ſome meaſure affixed to the very nature of man, and generally obvious to the vulgar, except upon ſubjects too refined, and ſuperior to their underſtanding."

A taste for humour is obvious to the vulgar, is a very inaccurate expreſſion. It is humour itſelf that is obvious to the vulgar, not a taſte for humour.

"And as this taſte for humour is purely natural, ſo is humour itſelf; neither is it a talent confined to men of wit or learning; for we obſerve it ſometimes among common ſervants, and the meaneſt of the people, while the very owners are often ignorant of the gift they poſſeſs."

By *humour itself*, the author muſt mean the exertions of the natural talent of humour: but in the next clauſe he confounds the talent with its exertions. *The owners of a talent*, is an expreſſion by no means elegant.

"I know very well, that this happy talent is contemptibly treated by critics, under the name of low humour, or low comedy; but I know likewiſe, that the Spaniards and Italians, who are allowed to have the moſt wit of any nation in Europe, do moſt excel in it, and do moſt eſteem it."

Still the author diſcovers a want of preciſion in his ideas. A talent for humour can never with any propriety be termed *low comedy*.

"By what diſpoſition of the mind, what influence of the ſtars, or what ſituation of the climate, this endowment is beſtowed upon mankind, may be a queſtion fit for philoſophers to diſcuſs. It is certainly the beſt ingredient towards that kind of ſatyr, which is moſt uſeful, and gives the leaſt offence; which, inſtead of laſhing, laughs men out of their follies, and vices; and is the character that gives Horace the preference to Juvenal."

The firſt of theſe ſentences is unexceptionable, but the laſt cannot be commended.—*It is certainly the best ingredient towards that kind of satyr.* Here the prepoſition *towards* is uſed with little propriety. Either *in* or *of* would be preferable. The period ought to have cloſed with the word *vices*: the next clauſe forms a complete ſentence. "It is the poſſeſſion of this talent that gives Horace the preference to Juvenal."

"And although ſomethings are too ſerious, ſolemn, or ſacred to be turned into ridicule, yet the abuſes of them are certainly not; ſince it is allowed that conceptions in religion, politics, and law, may be proper topics for this kind of ſatyr."

On this period I have nothing particular to obſerve.

"There are two ends that men propoſe in writing ſatyr; one of them leſs noble than the other, as regarding nothing farther than the private ſatisfaction, and pleaſure of the writer; but without any view towards perſonal malice: the other is a public ſpirit, prompting men of genius and virtue, to mend the world as far as they are able."

Public ſpirit is not an *end* which men propoſe in writing ſatire: it is one of the *motives* which impel them to have recourſe to this weapon.

"And as both theſe ends are innocent, ſo the latter is highly commendable. With regard to the former, I demand, whether I have not as good a title to laugh, as men have to be ridiculous; and to expoſe vice, as another has to be vicious. If I ridicule the follies and corruptions of a court, a miniſtry, or a ſenate, are they not amply paid by penſions, titles, and power; while I expect, and deſire no other reward, than that of laughing with a few friends in a corner? Yet, if thoſe who take offence, think we in the wrong, I am ready to change the ſcene with them, whenever they pleaſe."

Theſe ſentences are entitled to praiſe. The expreſſion is pointed, and the arrangement accurate.

"But, if my deſign be to make mankind better, then I think it is my duty; at leaſt I am ſure it is the intereſt of thoſe very courts and miniſters, whoſe follies or vices I ridicule, to reward my good intentions: for if it be reckoned a high point of wiſdom to get the laughers on our ſide, it is much more eaſy, as well as wiſe, to get thoſe on our ſide, who can make millions laugh when they pleaſe.

"My reaſon for mentioning courts, and miniſters (whom I never think on, but with the moſt profound veneration) is becauſe an opinion obtains, that in the *Beggar's Opera*, there appears to be ſome reflection upon courtiers and ſtateſmen, whereof I am by no means a judge."

One would ſuppoſe that, in the laſt of theſe periods, the author intends to ſay, that he was no judge of courtiers and ſtateſmen: whereas his real meaning muſt be that he cannot judge concerning the circumſtance of this Opera's containing reflections upon theſe perſonages. The period might be improved thus: "An opinion obtains, that in the Beggar's Opera, there appears to be ſome reflection upon courtiers and ſtateſmen; a circumſtance of which I am by no means a judge.

"It is true, indeed, that Mr. Gay, the author of this piece, hath been ſomewhat ſingular in the courſe of his for-

tunes; for it hath happened, that after fourteen years attending the court, with a large ſtock of real merit, a modeſt and agreeable converſation, a hundred promiſes, and five hundred friends, hath failed of preferment; and upon a very weighty reaſon."

After fourteen years attending the court.—It is more proper to ſay, *after fourteen years' attendance at court*, or, *after attending the court for fourteen years.*—By a typographical error, the pronoun *he* ſeems to have been omitted before the words *hath failed.*—*Upon a weighty reaſon*, is an unuſual expreſſion. We commonly ſay, *for a weighty reaſon.*

"He lay under the ſuſpicion of having written a libel, or lampoon againſt a great miniſter. It is true, that great miniſter was demonſtratively convinced, and publicly owned his conviction, that Mr. Gay was not the author; but having lain under the ſuſpicion, it ſeemed very juſt, that he ſhould ſuffer the puniſhment; becauſe in this moſt reformed age, the virtues of a prime miniſter are no more to be ſuſpected than the chaſtity of Cæſar's wife."

The laſt ſentence is ſomewhat ambiguous. The conſtruction would leave room to ſuppoſe that the prime miniſter had lain under ſuſpicion of having written a libel or lampoon againſt himſelf. The ambiguity might eaſily be removed: "But *this poet* having lain under the ſuſpicion."

"It muſt be allowed that the Beggar's Opera is not the firſt of Mr. Gay's works, wherein he hath been faulty, with regard to courtiers and ſtateſmen. For to omit his other pieces; even in his Fables, publiſhed within two years paſt, and dedicated to the Duke of Cumberland, for which he was promiſed a reward, he hath been thought ſomewhat too bold upon the courtiers."

The latter of theſe ſentences is rendered harſh and clumſy by the concourſe of ſo many circumſtances; *published within two years paſt,—dedicated to the Duke of Cumberland,—for which he was promiſed a reward.*

"And although it be highly probable, he meant only the courtiers of former times, yet he acted unwarily, by not conſidering, that the malignity of ſome people might miſinterpret what he ſaid, to the diſadvantage of preſent perſons and affairs."

The contraſt contained in this ſentence would be more emphatically expreſt in the following manner: "And although it be highly probable, he meant only *the courtiers of former times*, yet he acted unwarily, by not conſidering, that the malignity of ſome people might miſinterpret what he ſaid, to the diſadvantage of *thoſe of the preſent times*."

"But I have now done with Mr. Gay as a politician; and ſhall conſider him henceforward only as author of the *Beggar's Opera*, wherein he hath by a turn of humour, entirely new, placed vices of all kinds in the ſtrongeſt and moſt odious light: and thereby, done eminent ſervice, both to religion and morality."

The poſition of the adverb *only* leaves us uncertain whether it be intended to qualify what preceder or what follows. Better thus: "But I have now done with Mr. Gay as a politician; and henceforward ſhall only conſider him as author of the *Beggar's Opera*. Here the ſentence might very properly have been cloſed: and the ſucceeding one might have commenced thus: "In this performance he hath by a turn of humour," &c.

"This appears from the unparalleled ſucceſs he hath met with. All ranks, parties, and denominations of men either crouding to ſee his Opera, or reading it with delight in their cloſets; even miniſters of ſtate, whom he is ſuppoſed to have moſt offended (next to thoſe whom the actors repreſent) appearing frequently at the Theatre, from a conſciouſneſs of their own innocence, and to convince the world how unjuſt a parallel, malice, envy, and diſſatisfaction to the government have made."

At the beginning of this quotation the pronoun *this* refers not to any particular word that has formerly occurred, but to the general tenor of the foregoing ſentence. This practice is not altogether conſiſtent with accuracy of ſtyle.—After the words *he hath met with*, there ought only to have been a ſemicolon. In its preſent ſtate the ſucceeding ſentence has a mutilated appearance. The correſponding words *miniſters of ſtate*, and *appearing*, ſtand at too great diſtance from each other.

"I am aſſured that ſeveral worthy clergymen in this city, want privately to ſee the *Beggar's Opera* repreſented; and

that the fleering coxcombs in the pit, amuſed themſelves with making diſcoveries, and ſpreading the names of thoſe gentlemen round the audience."

This ſentence is ſmooth and correct.

"I ſhall not pretend to vindicate a clergyman, who would appear openly in his habit at the Theatre, with ſuch a vicious crew, as might probably ſtand round him, at ſuch comedies, and profane tragedies as are often repreſented. Beſides, I know very well, that perſons of their function are bound to avoid the appearance of evil, or of giving cauſe of offence."

The latter of theſe periods diſcovers a confuſion of ideas. The author ſpeaks of avoiding the appearance of giving cauſe of offence. Now in the caſe which is here alluded to, it is only by appearances that offence can be given: it would therefore have been as proper to have ſpoken of the appearance of the appearance of offence.

"But when the Lords Chancellors, who are keepers of the king's conſcience; when judges of the land, whoſe title is *Reverend*; when ladies, who are bound by the rules of their ſex to the ſtricteſt decency, appear in the Theatre without cenſure; I cannot underſtand, why a young clergyman, who comes concealed, out of curioſity to ſee an innocent and moral play, ſhould be ſo highly condemned: nor do I much approve the rigour of a great prelate, who ſaid, *he hoped none of his clergy were there.*"

In the expreſſion, *a young clergyman who comes concealed, out of curioſity*, there is ſome degree of ambiguity. It ſeems rather to imply that he is concealed out of curioſity, than that he viſits the theatre out of curioſity. The following arrangement is more correct: "I cannot underſtand, why a young clergyman who, out of curioſity, comes concealed to ſee an innocent and moral play, ſhould be ſo highly condemned."

"I am glad to hear there are no weightier objections againſt that Reverend Body planted in this city, and I wiſh there never may. But I ſhould be very ſorry, that any of them ſhould be ſo weak, as to imitate a court-chaplain in England, who preached againſt the *Beggar's Opera*; which

will probably do more good, than a thousand sermons of so stupid, so injudicious, and so prostitute a divine."*

The metaphor contained in the first of these sentences, seems liable to objection. The author speaks of a body *planted* in the city of Dublin.

The other period is somewhat deficient in unity. The last clause of it should have formed a separate sentence: "This production will probably do more good," &c.

CHAP. XXVII.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF A PASSAGE IN THE WRITINGS OF HARRIS.

"NOW the language of these Greeks was *truly like themselves*, *'twas* conformable to their transcendent and universal genius. Where matter so abounded, words followed of course, and those exquisite in every kind, as the ideas for which they stood. And hence it followed, there was not a subject to be found, which could not with propriety be expressed in Greek."

The first of these sentences might be improved by the omission of the words printed in Italic characters.—Mr. Harris seems to have had a particular affection for contractions. That he should always prefer *'tis* to *it is*, *'twas* to *it was*, *'twere* to *it were*, appears somewhat surprising. This practice certainly cannot encrease the smoothness or harmony of his periods. But as the Greek language abounds in contractions, he probably thought, that by imitating it in this respect he might contribute to the improvement of his native tongue.

To many readers the second sentence will have the appearance of being stiff and quaint. The manner in which the conjunction *as* is there used, is accompanied with some ambiguity. The sense may either be, "That the words possess the same degree of exquisiteness with the ideas for which

* Intelligencer, No. 3.

they ſtood;" or "That the words were exquiſite as well as the ideas." If the latter was the author's meaning, the period may be cleared of all ambiguity by ſubſtituting *like* inſtead of *as*.

"Here were words and numbers for the humour of Ariſtophanes; for the native elegance of a Philemon or Menander; for the amorous ſtrains of a Mimnermus or Sappho; for the rural lays of a Theocritus or Bion; and for the ſublime conceptions of a Sophocles or Homer. The ſame in proſe."

Here were is a phraſe which approaches too near vulgar or colloquial language. In other reſpects the period is elegant and ſonorous.

The Engliſh language does not admit of ſuch eliptical phraſeology as appears in the latter of theſe ſentences.

"Here Socrates was enabled to diſplay his art, in all the accuracy of periods, and the nice counterpoiſe of diction. Here Demoſthenes found materials for that nervous compoſition, that manly force of unaffected eloquence, which ruſhed, like a torrent, too impetuous to be withſtood."

This paſſage is not devoid of beauty. The expreſſions in the firſt ſentence ſeem peculiarly happy.

"Who were more different in exhibiting their philoſophy, than Xenophon, Plato, and his diſciple Ariſtotle? Different, I ſay, in their character of compoſition; for as to their philoſophy itſelf, 'twas in reality the ſame. Ariſtotle, ſtrict, methodic, and orderly; ſubtle in thought; ſparing in ornament; with little addreſs to the paſſions or imaginations; but exhibiting the whole with ſuch a pregnant liberty, that in every ſentence we ſeem to read a page."

Different, I say, in their character of compoſition.—This is a very unuſual and a very awkward method of beginning a ſentence. In conſtructing the laſt of theſe periods, the author ſeems to have forgotten that he was writing Engliſh. Such a conſtruction is foreign to the nature of our language, whatever it may be with regard to that of Greece and Rome. The whole paſſage diſcovers marks of affectation.

How exquiſitely is this all performed in Greek?

The propriety of his ſentence would not be diminiſhed by a

ſlight change in the collocation of the words: "How exquiſitely is all this performed in Greek!"

"Let thoſe who imagine that it may be done as well in another language, ſatisfy themſelves either by attempting to tranſlate him, or by peruſing his tranſlations already made by men of learning. On the contrary when we read either Xenophon or Plato, nothing of this method and ſtrict order appears. The formal and didactic is wholly dropt."

His translations is an ambiguous phraſe. Inſtead of expreſſing what the ſenſe of the paſſage requires, it may ſignify tranſlations executed by Ariſtotle. *The translations of him* is an expreſſion that is not ſubject to the like ambiguity: though analogy might point out a different practice, we always apply it in the ſame way.

"Whatever they may teach, 'tis without profeſſing to be teachers; a train of dialogue and truly polite addreſs, in which, as in a mirror, we behold human life, adorned in all its colours of ſentiment and manners."

To render the ſenſe of this paſſage complete, the reader muſt, at the beginning of the ſecond clauſe, ſupply ſome phraſe equivalent to the following: "Their writings exhibit a train," &c. As the ſentence now ſtands, it is looſe and disjointed.

"And yet, though theſe differ in this manner from the Stagirite, how different are they likewiſe in character from each other? Plato, copious, figurative, and majeſtic; intermixing at times the facetious and ſatiric; enriching his works with tales and fables, and the myſtic theology of ancient times. Xenophon, the pattern of perfect ſimplicity; every where ſmooth, harmonious, and pure; declining the figurative, the marvellous, and the myſtic; aſcending but rarely into the ſublime; nor then ſo much truſting to the colours of ſtyle, as to the intrinſic dignity of the ſentiment itſelf."

Of theſe ſentences the two laſt are rendered deficient in idiomatical purity by the omiſſion of the ſubſtantive verb. This is a piece of affectation of which Mr. Harris is very frequently guilty.—The word *itself*, which occurs at the cloſe of the laſt period, is perfectly redundant. Without contributing to the ſenſe, it tends to injure the ſound.

"The language, in the mean time, in which he and Plato

wrote, appears to ſuit ſo accurately with the ſtyle of both, that when we read either of the two, we cannot help thinking, that 'tis he alone, who has hit its character, and that it could not have appeared ſo elegant in any other manner."

This is a very expreſſive ſentence. It is not however unexceptionable: *in the mean time* is in this inſtance an idle unmeaning phraſe, ſimilar to what many of the Greek particles appear to unenlightened moderns.

"And thus is the Greek tongue, from its propriety and univerſality, made for all that is great, and all that is beautiful, in every ſubject, and under every form of writing.

Graiis ingenium, Graiis dedit ore rotundo
Muſa loqui."

A *tongue made for all that is great* has no very dignified ſound. The ſentence might, I think, be improved by ſubſtituting *fitted* inſtead of *made*.

"'Twere to be wiſhed, that thoſe amongſt us, who either write or read, with a view to employ their liberal leiſure (for as to ſuch as do either from views more ſordid, we leave them, like ſlaves, to their deſtined drudgery) 'twere to be wiſhed, I ſay, that the liberal (if they have a reliſh for letters) would inſpect the finiſhed models of Grecian literature; that they would not waſte thoſe hours, which they cannot recal, upon the meaner productions of the French and Engliſh preſs; upon that fungous growth of novels and pamphlets, where 'tis to be feared, they rarely find any rational pleaſure, and more rarely ſtill, any ſolid enjoyment."

'Twere to be wiſhed, that the author had conſtructed this long ſentence with a more ſkilful hand. Inſtead of arranging it with more luminous propriety, he has had recourſe to the ſorry expedient of introducting parentheſes, and the contemptible little phraſe *I ſay*. The period is thus rendered confuſed and inartificial. Towards the cloſe of it, however, the cadence is agreeable to the ear.

"To be competently ſkilled in ancient learning, is by no means a work of ſuch inſuperable pains. The very progreſs itſelf is attended with delight, and reſembles a journey through ſome pleaſant country, where every mile we advance, new charms ariſe. 'Tis certainly as eaſy to be a ſcholar,

as a gameſter, or many other characters equally illiberal and low."

The very progress itself—In a phraſe of this kind it is ſuperfluous to uſe both *very* and *itself*. Either of them would have been ſufficient.

The cadence of the words *new charms arise* approaches too nearly to that of poetry. The language of proſe and the language of verſe ought always to be kept diſtinct. To this rule ſome of our writers do not appear to have paid proper attention. In the proſe compoſitions of Shafteſbury and Hervey, for example, we often find regular and ſonorous verſes.

It is easy to be a character has an uncouth ſound. The author might certainly have expreſſed himſelf with greater propriety.

"The ſame application, the ſame quantity of habit will fit us for one, as completely as for the other. And as to thoſe who tell us, with an air of ſeeming wiſdom, that 'tis men, and not books we muſt ſtudy to become knowing; this I have always remarked from repeated experience, to be the common conſolation and language of dunces."

The ſecond ſentence is not altogether correct. The concluſion of it does not bear a proper and legitimate reference to the beginning. When we meet with the words *as to those who tell us*, &c. we are given to expect, that the author's ſucceeding obſervation will apply immediately to theſe perſons themſelves; whereas it only applies to the language to which they have recourſe for conſolation. A few alterations may be ſuggeſted: "As to the obſervation which has ſo frequently been made with an air of ſeeming wiſdom, that it is men, and not books that we ought to ſtudy in order to acquire uſeful knowledge; this I have always remarked from repeated experience to be the common conſolation of dunces."

"They ſhelter their ignorance under a few bright examples, whoſe tranſcendent abilities, without the common helps, have been ſufficient of themſelves to great important ends. But alas!

Decipit exemplar vitiis imitabile."

In the expreſſion *abilities ſufficient to great and important ends*, there is ſomething extremely awkward. The ſentence appears ſuſceptible of improvement: "They ſhelter their ignorance under the bright example of a few individuals who, tranſcendent abilities, without the common helps, have been adequate to great and important undertakings."

"In truth, each man's underſtanding, when ripened and mature, is a compoſite of natural capacity, and of ſuperinduced habit."

This application of *compoſite* ſavours of pedantry. Why it is preferred to *compoſition*, is not altogether obvious: the latter is certainly a more ſonorous word. No other writer, as far as my information ſerves me, has ever uſed *compoſite* as a noun ſubſtance. It is an adjective that is only uſed in treating of architecture. "Some are of opinion," ſays Addiſon "that the *compoſite* pillars of this arch were made in imitation of the pillars of Solomon's temple."*

"Hence the greateſt men will be neceſſarily thoſe, who poſſeſs the beſt capacities, cultivated with the beſt habits. Hence alſo moderate capacities, when adorned with valuable ſcience, will far tranſcend others the moſt acute by nature, when either neglected, or applied to low and baſe purpoſes. And thus for the honour of culture and good learning, they are able to render a man, if he will take the pains, intrinſically more excellent than his natural ſuperior."

And thus for the honour and culture of good learning—This expreſſion appears ſomewhat antiquated.—*If he will take the pains*, is a phraſe which may juſtly be charged with vulgarity.

"And ſo much at preſent as to general ideas; how we acquire them; whence they are derived; what is their nature; and what their connection with language. So much likewiſe as to the ſubject of this treatiſe. Univerſal Grammar."†

This is a concluſion truly Grecian. I have often been ſurpriſed that Mr. Harris did not commence his treatiſe at the

* Addiſon's Remarks on Italy.
† Harris's Hermes, book iii. chap. v.

ſame antique mode. He might, for example, have begun in this manner: "James Harris wrote the following diſcourſe concerning the principles of univerſal grammar."*

CHAP. XXVIII.

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF A PASSAGE IN THE WRITINGS OF ROBERTSON.

"WHILE theſe ſentiments prevailed among her ſubjects, Elizabeth thought ſhe might ſafely venture to ſtrike the blow, which ſhe had ſo long meditated. She commanded Daviſon, one of the ſecretaries of ſtate, to bring to her the fatal warrant; and her behaviour, on that occaſion, plainly ſhewed that it is not to humanity that we muſt aſcribe her forbearance hitherto."

The latter of theſe ſentences is not conſtructed with the uſual ſkill of this beautiful writer: the concluſion of it is by no means graceful. The defect, perhaps, could not be remedied without the aid of circumlocution.

"At the very moment ſhe was ſubſcribing the writ which gave up a woman, a queen, and her own neareſt relation, into the hands of the executioner, ſhe was capable of jeſting. "Go," ſays ſhe to Daviſon, "and tell Walſingham what I have now done, though I am afraid he will die for grief when he hears it." Her chief anxiety was how to ſecure the advantages which would ariſe from Mary's death, without appearing to have given her conſent to a deed ſo infamous."

In this paſſage every thing is accurate and luminous.

"She often hinted to Paulet and Drury, as well as to ſome other courtiers, that now was the time to diſcover the ſincerity of their concern for her ſafety, and that ſhe expected their zeal would extricate her out of her preſent perplexity."

* The moſt ancient philoſophical treatiſe now extant begins nearly in the above manner.

The phraſe *now was the time* appears to be ſomewhat deficient in dignity. The author might have expreſſed himſelf thus: "She often hinted to Paulet and Drury, as well as to ſome other courtiers, that an opportunity was now afforded for diſcovering the ſincerity of their concern for her ſafety, &c.

"But they were wiſe enough to ſeem not to underſtand her meaning."

A ſentence that muſt thus include an affirmative and a negative, can never poſſeſs much elegance.

"Even after the warrant was ſigned, ſhe commanded a letter to be written to Paulet, in leſs ambiguous terms: complaining of his remiſſneſs in ſparing ſo long the life of her capital enemy, and begging him to remember at laſt what was incumbent on him as an affectionate ſubject, and to deliver his ſovereign from continual fear and danger, by ſhortening the days of his priſoner. Paulet, though rigorous and harſh, and often brutal in the diſcharge of what he thought his duty, as Mary's keeper, was nevertheleſs a man of honour and integrity."

This paſſage does not require any particular animadverſion.

"He rejected the propoſal with diſdain; and lamenting that he ſhould ever have been deemed capable of acting the part of an aſſaſſin, he declared that the Queen might diſpoſe of his life at her pleaſure, but he would never ſtain his own honor, nor leave an everlaſting mark of infamy on his poſterity, by lending his hand to perpetrate ſo foul a crime."

By lending his hand, is a phraſe which appears to me unſuitable to the dignity of hiſtorical compoſition; though my averſion to it may perhaps have originated from having heard it ſo often drawled out in the recitation of the following lines:

For this forenſon be had that ſcant of grace,
And breeding baith, to tell me to my face
He hoped I was a witch and wadna ſtand
To lend him in this caſe my helping hand. *Ramſey.*

"On the receipt of this anſwer, Elizabeth became ex-

tremely peevish; and calling him a *dainty* and *precise fellow*, who would promise much, but perform nothing, she proposed to employ one Wingfield, who had both courage and inclination to strike the blow."

The Queen's calling Paulet a *dainty* and *precise fellow*, has little connection with her proposing to have recourse to the assistance of Wingfield. The author's meaning, therefore, ought to have been diffused into two distinct periods: "On the receipt of this answer, Elizabeth became extremely peevish, and called him a *dainty* and *precise fellow*, who would promise much and perform nothing. She next proposed to employ one Wigfield, who had both courage and inclination to strike the blow."

"But Davison remonstrating against this method as no less dangerous than dishonorable, she again declared her intention, that the sentence pronounced by the commissioners should be executed according to law; and as she had already signed the warrant, she begged that no farther application might be made to her on that head. By this the Privy Counsellors thought themselves sufficiently authorised to proceed; and prompted, as they pretended, by zeal for the Queen's safety, or instigated, as is more probable, by the apprehension of the danger to which they would themselves be exposed, if the life of the Queen of Scots were spared, they assembled in the council chamber, and by a letter under all their hands, empowered the Earls of Shrewsbury and Kent, together with the High Sheriff of the county, to see the sentence put in execution."

By this the Privy Counsellors thought themselves sufficiently authorised to proceed. It is a practice too common among authors, to make such particles as *this* and *which* refer not to any particular antecedent word, but to the tenor of some preceding phrase, or perhaps to some preceding sentence. This practice saves them trouble in marshalling their words, and arranging their periods; but though it may leave their meaning intelligible, yet it renders that meaning much less perspicuous, determined, and precise, than it might otherwise have been. The error which appears in the above passage, may easily be removed: The privy counsellors now thought themselves sufficiently authorised to proceed."—

This reading, without weakening the expreſſion, is more correct.

In the ſentence to which we have now referred, the repetition of the word *Queen* might without much difficulty have been avoided.

"On Tueſday the ſeventh of February, the two Earls arrived at Fotheringay, and demanding acceſs to the Queen, read in her preſence the warrant for execution, and required her to prepare to die next morning."

We again meet with the word *Queen* in this period, though it occurs twice in the laſt. *Execution* cloſes the former ſentence; yet it is alſo found to occupy an important place in this. Theſe, it muſt be confeſſed, are errors of a very trivial kind; but if they *are* errors, an author ſhould endeavour to avoid them. If however they cannot be removed without weakening the expreſſion, they ought beyond all doubt to be retained.

"Mary heard them to the end without emotion; and croſſing herſelf in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt, 'That ſoul,' ſaid ſhe, 'is not worthy of the joys of Heaven, which repines becauſe the body muſt endure the ſtroke of the executioner: and although I did not expect that the Queen of England would ſet the firſt example of violating the ſacred perſon of a Sovereign Prince, I willingly ſubmit to that which providence has decreed to be my lot.'"

The author might have ſaid, *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt*; but the expreſſion he has adopted, produces a much better effect.

"And laying her hand on a Bible, which happened to be near her, ſhe ſolemnly proteſted that ſhe was innocent of that conſpiracy which Babington had carried on againſt Elizabeth's life. She then mentioned the requeſts contained in her letter to Elizabeth, but obtained no ſatisfactory anſwer. She entreated with particular earneſtneſs, that now in her laſt moments, her Almoner might be ſuffered to attend her, and that ſhe might enjoy the conſolation of thoſe pious inſtitutions, preſcribed by her religion. Even this favour, which is uſually granted to the vileſt criminal, was abſolutely denied."

The third of these sentences possesses more than common beauty.

"Her attendants, during this conversation, were bathed in tears, and though overawed by the presence of the two Earls, with difficulty suppressed their anguish; but no sooner did Kent and Shrewsbury withdraw, than they ran to their mistress, and burst out into the most passionate expressions of tenderness and sorrow."

At the commencement of this period, the more natural order of the words ought perhaps to have been followed: "During this conversation, her attendants were bathed in tears." This seems in every respect preferable to the other mode of arrangement.

"Mary, however, not only retained perfect composure of mind, but endeavoured to moderate their excessive grief.—And falling on her knees, with all her domestics round her, she thanked heaven that her sufferings were now so near an end; and prayed that she might be enabled to endure what still remained with decency and with fortitude. The greater part of the evening she employed in settling her worldly affairs. She wrote her testament with her own hand. Her money, her jewels, and her cloaths, she distributed among her servants according to their rank or merit. She wrote a short letter to the king of France, and another to the Duke of Guise, full of tender but magnanimous sentiments, and recommended her sons to their prayers, and her afflicted servants to their protection. At supper she eat temperately as usual, and conversed not only with ease but with cheerfulness; she drank to every one of her servants, and asked their forgiveness, if ever she had failed in any part of her duty towards them. At her wonted time she went to bed, and slept calmly a few hours. Early in the morning she retired to her closet, and employed a considerable time in devotion. At eight o'clock the High Sheriff and his officers entered her chamber, and found her still kneeling at the altar. She immediately started up and with a majestic mean, and a countenance undismayed and even cheerful, advanced towards the place of execution, leaning on two of Paulet's attendants. She was dressed in a mourning habit, but with an elegance and splendor, which she had long laid aside, except on a few festival days. An *Agnus Dei* hung by a pomander chain at her neck; her beads at her girdle; and in her hand she carried a crucifix of ivory.

In this paſſage it would perhaps be impoſſible to improve a ſingle ſentence, either by ſubſtituting new words, or by altering the arrangement: every thing is diſtinct, accurate, and elegant.

"At the bottom of the ſtairs, the two Earls, attended by ſeveral gentlemen from the neighbouring counties, received her; and there Sir Andrew Melvil, the maſter of her houſhold, who had been ſecluded, for ſome weeks, from her preſence, was permitted to take his laſt farewel. At the ſight of a miſtreſs whom he tenderly loved, in ſuch a ſituation, he melted into tears: and as he was bewailing her condition, and complaining of his own hard fate in being appointed to carry the account of ſuch a mournful event into Scotland, Mary replied, "Weep not, good Melvil; there is at preſent greater cauſe for rejoicing. Thou ſhalt this day ſee Mary Stuart delivered from all her cares, and ſuch an end put to her tedious ſufferings as ſhe has long expected. Bear witneſs that I die conſtant in my religion; firm in my fidelity towards Scotland; and unchanged in my affection to France. Commend me to my ſon. Tell him I have done nothing injurious to his kingdom, to his honor, or to his rights: and God forgive all thoſe who have thirſted, without cauſe, for my blood."

At the ſight of a miſtreſs whom he tenderly loved in ſuch a ſituation, he melted into tears. The author's meaning is, "That he melted into tears on beholding his beloved miſtreſs in ſuch a ſituation;" but the manner in which he has expreſſed himſelf is ambiguous.

The beautiful paſſage which we have been conſidering in the courſe of this chapter is rendered more captivating by means of thoſe dramatic touches with which it is interſperſed. It is not to be ſuppoſed that any of theſe ſhort ſpeeches was originally delivered in the identical words that are here adopted by the hiſtorian. All that can reaſonably be required is, that he expreſs the very ſame ſentiment. A late writer, however, delivers a different opinion with regard to this ſubject. "An exceſs of poliſh and refinement," ſays Dr. Ferriar, "among other inconveniences, tempts the hiſtorian to ſuppreſs or vary the ſtrong original expreſſions, which trying occaſions extort for men of genius. Yet theſe, infinitely ſuperior to phraſes which have cooled in the crit-

cal balance, always form the brightest ornaments of a well composed history. They transport our imagination to the scene, domesticate us with eminent men, and afford us a kind of temporary existence in other ages. Few of our writers, excepting Lloyd, have attended sufficiently to the preservation of those flashes of sentiment and intelligence. A single word sometimes conveys as much information of character and principles, as a whole dissertation."* These observations are certainly just: but how is it possible to ascertain whether in every instance such expressions have actually been used by the persons to whom they are attributed? We even find that in reporting the expressions used on certain occasions by our Saviour, his disciples do not always completely coincide with each other. They express the same meaning, but in different words.

If therefore a writer in our own times were to copy such expressions as are here alluded to from some ancient English chronologist, he might happen to deviate almost as far from those originally uttered, as he could do by varying the phraseology according to his particular taste.

"With much difficulty, and after many entreaties, she prevailed on the two Earls to allow Melvil, together with three of her men servants, and two of her maids, to attend her to the scaffold. It was erected in the same hall where she had been tried, raised a little above the floor, and covered, as well as a chair, the cushion, and block, with black cloth. Mary mounted the steps with alacrity, beheld all this apparatus of death with an unaltered countenance, and signing herself with the cross, she sat down in the chair."

In the last of these sentences the pronoun *she* appears redundant: it is not more requisite before *sat* than before *beheld*. I would prefer the following reading; "Mary mounted the steps with alacrity: she beheld the apparatus of death with an unaltered countenance, and, signing herself with the cross, sat down in the chair."

"Beale read the warrant for execution with a loud voice, to which she listened with a careless air, and like one occupied in other thoughts. Then the Dean of Peterborough began a devout discourse, suitable to her present condition,

* Ferriar's Menippean Essay on English Historians.

and offered up prayers to Heaven in her behalf; but she declared that she could not in conscience hearken to the one, nor join with the other; and falling on her knees repeated a Latin prayer."

In the writings of our modern English authors the adverb *then* is seldom placed at the beginning of a sentence. But in a description of this solemn kind it perhaps would not have such a good effect in any other position. The author might have said, "The Dean of Peterborough then began a devout discourse, suitable to her present condition:" but he has with propriety adopted a different mode of arrangement.

The sentence does not close with great facility: the last clause forms no due counterbalance to the one immediately preceding.

"When the Dean had finished his devotions, she with an audible voice, and in the English tongue, recommended unto God the afflicted state of the Church, and prayed for prosperity to her son, and for a long life, and peaceable reign to Elizabeth. She declared she hoped for mercy only through the death of Christ, at the foot of whose image she now willingly shed her blood; and lifting up and blessing the crucifix, she thus addressed: "As thy arms, O Jesus, were extended on the cross; so with the outstretched arms of thy mercy, receive me, and forgive me my sins."

She declared that she hoped for mercy only through the death of Christ.

The position of the adverb *only* occasions some degree of ambiguity. Instead of conveying what is evidently the author's meaning, these words may imply "That through the death of Christ, she hoped for nothing besides mercy." This ambiguity, however, it would be difficult in the present instance to remove, except by adopting a quite different phraseology. Should we place the adverb after *Christ*, the sense would still be left ambiguous; nor could the defect be remedied by placing it after *death*.

She thus addressed. The adverb *address* is never, as far as I remember, used in a neuter sense, except in poetical compositions.

"She then prepared for the block, by taking off her veil and upper garments: and one of the executioners rudely en-

deavouring to aſſiſt, ſhe gently checked him, and ſaid, with a ſmile, that ſhe had not been accuſtomed to undreſs before ſo many ſpectators, nor to be ſerved by ſuch valets. With calm but undaunted fortitude, ſhe laid her neck on the block; and while one executioner held her hands, the other at the ſecond ſtroke, cut off her head, which falling out of its attire, diſcovered her hair already grown quite gray, with cares and ſorrows. The executioner held it up ſtill ſtreaming with blood, and the Dean crying out, "So periſh all Queen Elizabeth's enemies," the Earl of Kent alone anſwered Amen. The reſt of the ſpectators continued ſilent, and drowned in tears; being incapable at that moment, of any other ſentiments, but thoſe of pity or admiration."

This paſſage forms a very proper concluſion to the beautiful narration which we have been conſidering.

CHAP. XXIX.

OF THE METHOD OF ATTAINING A GOOD STYLE.

TO pretend to preach the art of fine writing by a ſeries of mechanical rules, would be highly abſurd. The young ſtudent may, however, be aſſiſted by a few plain directions concerning the proper method of attaining a ſtyle correct and elegant.

In the *firſt place*, we ought always to endeavour to obtain a clear and preciſe idea of every ſubject of which we propoſe to treat. This is a direction which may at firſt appear to have little relation to ſtyle. Its relation to it, however, is extremely cloſe. The foundation of fine writing, is good ſenſe accompanied with a lively imagination. The ſtyle and thoughts of a writer are ſo intimately connected, that it is frequently a difficult taſk to diſtinguiſh what depends upon the one, and what upon the other. Whenever the impreſſions of objects upon the mind are faint and indiſtinct, or perplexed and confuſed, our ſtyle in treating of ſuch objects can never be luminous or beautiful. Whereas,

* Hiſtory of Scotland, book vii.

what we conceive clearly and feel ſtrongly, we ſhall naturally expreſs with clearneſs and with ſtrength. This, then, we may be aſſured, is an important rule, to think cloſely of the ſubject, till we have attained a full and diſtinct view of the matter which we are to clothe in words, till we become warm and intereſted in it: then, and not till then, ſhall we find expreſſion begin to flow. Generally ſpeaking, the beſt and moſt proper expreſſions are thoſe which a clear view of the ſubject ſuggeſts, without much labour or inquiry.

In the *ſecond place*, to form a good ſtyle, the frequent practice of compoſing is indiſpenſably neceſſary. Many rules concerning ſtyle have been delivered; but no rules will anſwer the end without exerciſe and habit. At the ſame time, it is not every mode of compoſing that will improve ſtyle. This is ſo far from being the caſe, that by careleſs and haſty compoſition, we ſhall inevitably acquire a very bad ſtyle; we ſhall have more trouble afterwards in unlearning faults and correcting negligences, than if we had been totally unaccuſtomed to compoſition. At firſt, therefore, we ought to write ſlowly and with much care. Let the facility and ſpeed of writing be the fruit of longer practice.

"I enjoin," ſays Quinctilian, "that ſuch as are beginning the practice of compoſition, write ſlowly and with anxious deliberation. Their great object at firſt ſhould be, to write as well as poſſible: practice will enable them to write ſpeedily. By degrees, matter will offer itſelf ſtill more readily: words will be at hand; compoſition will flow; every thing as in the arrangement of a well ordered family, will preſent itſelf in its proper place. The ſum of the whole is this; that by haſty compoſition, we ſhall never acquire the art of compoſing well; by writing well, we ſhall come to write ſpeedily."*

We muſt not, however, be too anxious about words: we muſt not retard the courſe of thought, nor cool the heat of imagination, by pauſing too long on every word which we employ. There is, on certain occaſions, a glow of compoſition which ſhould be kept up, if we hope to expreſs ourſelves happily, though at the expenſe of allowing ſome inadvertencies to paſs. Theſe muſt afterwards be ſcrutinized

* Quinctilian. de Inſtitut. Orator. lib. x cap. iii.

with a critical eye. If the practice of compoſition be uſeful, the laborious work of correcting is no leſs ſo; it is abſolutely neceſſary to our reaping any benefit from the habit of compoſing. What we have written, ſhould be laid aſide till the ardour of compoſition be paſt, till our fondneſs for the expreſſions which we have uſed, be worn off, and the expreſſions themſelves be forgotten. By reviewing our work with a cool and critical eye, as if it were the performance of another, we ſhall diſcern many imperfections which at firſt eſcaped our obſervation. It is then the ſeaſon for pruning redundancies; for examining the arrangement of ſentences; and for bringing ſtyle into a regular, correct, and ſupported form. To this labour of correction all thoſe muſt ſubmit who would communicate their thoughts to others with proper advantage; and ſome practice in it will ſoon ſharpen the eye to the moſt neceſſary objects of attention, and render the taſk much more eaſy and practicable than might at firſt be imagined.

In the *third place*, with reſpect to the aſſiſtance which is to be derived from the writings of others, it is obvious that, we ought to render ourſelves well acquainted with the ſtyle of the beſt authors. This is requiſite both to form a juſt taſte in ſtyle, and to ſupply us with a full ſtock of words on every ſubject.

In the *fourth place*, we muſt beware of falling into a ſervile imitation of any author whatſoever. Imitation is always dangerous. It fetters genius, and is likely to produce a ſtiff manner. Thoſe who are addicted to cloſe imitation, generally imitate an author's faults as well as his beauties. No man will ever become a good writer or ſpeaker, who has not ſome degree of confidence to follow his own genius. We ought to beware, in particular, of adopting any author's noted phraſes, or tranſcribing paſſages from him. Such a habit will prove fatal to all genuine compoſition. It is much better to have ſomething that is our own, though of moderate beauty, than to affect to ſhine in borrowed ornaments, which will at laſt betray the utter poverty of our genius. On theſe heads of compoſing, reading, and imitating, I would adviſe every ſtudent of oratory to conſult what Quinctilian has delivered in the tenth book of his Inſtitutions, where he will find a variety of excellent obſervations and directions.

In the *fifth place*, thoſe who are ambitious of attaining a beautiful ſtyle, ought to ſtudy with attention the works of the moſt eminent poets. From this ſource is often derived a more delicate and elevated mode of expreſſion, as well as of thinking. We find that the moſt excellent proſe writers both of ancient and modern times are thoſe who, during ſome part of their life, have applied themſelves to the ſtudy of poetry. It will be ſufficient to mention the names of Plato, Cicero, Temple, Dryden, Pope, Addiſon, Melmoth, Johnſon, Goldſmith, Hamilton, Fenelon, and Voltaire.

In the *ſixth place*, it is an obvious but material rule, that we always ſtudy to adapt our ſtyle to the ſubject, and alſo to the capacity of our hearers, if we are to ſpeak in public. Nothing merits the name of eminent or beautiful, which is not ſuited to the occaſion, and to the perſons to whom it is addreſſed. It is to the laſt degree awkward and abſurd, to adopt a florid poetical ſtyle on occaſions when it ſhould be our ſole buſineſs to argue and reaſon; or to ſpeak with elaborate pomp of expreſſion before perſons who comprehend nothing of it, and who can only ſtare at our unſeaſonable magnificence. Theſe are defects not ſo much in point of ſtyle, as, what is much worſe, in point of common ſenſe. When we begin to write or ſpeak, we ought previouſly to have fixed in our minds a clear conception of the end to be aimed at. This end we ought to keep ſteadily in view; and to it we ought to adapt our ſtyle. If we do not ſacrifice to this great object every ill-timed ornament that may occur to our fancy, we betray a want of judgment.

In the *laſt place*, I cannot conclude the ſubject without this obſervation, that, in any caſe, and on any occaſion, attention to ſtyle muſt not engroſs us ſo much, as to detract from a higher degree of attention to the thoughts. To your expreſſion be attentive; but about your matter be ſolicitous.

EXAMPLES ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE PROGRESSIVE IMPROVEMENT OF ENGLISH COMPOSITION.

SIDNEY.

(Flourished between 1554 *and* 1586.)

LET learned Greece, in any of her manifeſt ſciences, be able to ſhew me one book before Muſæus, Homer, and Heſiod: all three nothing elſe but poets. Nay, let any hiſtory be brought, that can ſay any writers were there before them, if they were not men of the ſame ſkill, as Orpheus, Linus, and ſome others are named, who having been the firſt of that country that made pens deliverers of their knowledge to poſterity, may juſtly challenge to be called their fathers in learning. For not only in time they had this priority (although in itſelf antiquity be venerable) but went before them, as cauſes to draw, with their charming ſweetneſs, the wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge. So as Amphion was ſaid to move ſtones with his poetry to build Thebes, and Orpheus to be liſtened to by beaſts, indeed ſtony and beaſtly people: So among the Romans were Livius Andronicus, and Ennius: So in the Italian language, the firſt that made it to aſpire to be a treaſure-houſe of ſcience, were the poets Dante, Boccace and Petrarch: So in our Engliſh, were Gower, and Chaucer; after whom, encouraged and delighted with their excellent foregoing, others have followed to beautify our mother-tongue, as well in the ſame kind, as other arts.

This did ſo notably ſhew itſelf, that the philoſophers of Greece durſt not a long time appear to the world, but under the maſk of poets: So Thales, Empedocles, and Parmenides, ſang their natural philoſophy in verſes: So did Pythagoras and Phocylides their moral counſels: So did Tyrtæus in war matters, and Solon in matters of policy; or rather, they being poets, did exerciſe their delightful vein in thoſe points of higheſt knowledge, which before them lay hidden to the world: For that Solon was directly a poet, it is manifeſt, having written in verſe the noble fable of the

Atlantick Iſland, which was continued by Plato. And truly even Plato whoſoever well conſidereth, ſhall find, that in the body of his work, though the inſide and ſtrength were philoſophy, the ſkin, as it were, and beauty, depended moſt of poetry. For all ſtands upon dialogues; wherein he feigns many honeſt burgeſſes of Athens ſpeaking of ſuch matters, that if they had been ſet on the rack, they would never have confeſſed them: beſides, his poetical deſcribing the circumſtances of their meetings, as the well-ordering of a banquet, the delicacy of a walk, and interlacing mere tales, as Gyges's Ring, and others; which, who knows not to be flowers of poetry, did never walk in Apollo's garden.

Defence of Poesy.

RALEIGH.

(Between 1552 and 1618.)

God, whom the wiſeſt men ackowledge to be a power ineffable, and virtue infinite, a light by abundant clarity inviſible, an underſtanding which itſelf can only comprehend, an eſſence eternal and ſpiritual, of abſolute pureneſs and ſimplicity, was, and is pleaſed to make himſelf known by the work of the world: in the wonderful magnitude whereof, (all which he imbraceth, filleth, and ſuſtaineth) we behold the image of that glory, which cannot be meaſured, and withall that one, and yet univerſal nature, which cannot be defined. In the glorious lights of heaven, we perceive a ſhadow of his divine countenance; in his merciful proviſion for all that live, his manifold goodneſs; and laſtly, in creating and making exiſtent the world univerſal, by the abſolute art of his own word, his power and almightineſs; which power, light, virtue, wiſdom, and goodneſs, being all but attributes of one ſimple eſſence, and one God, we in all admire, and in part diſcern *per ſpeculum creaturarum*, that is, in the diſpoſition, order, and variety of celeſtial and terreſtrial bodies; terreſtrial, in their ſtrange and manifold diverſities; celeſtial, in their beauty and magnitude; which in their continual and contrary motions, are neither repugnant, intermixt, nor confounded. By theſe potent effects, we approach to the knowledge of the omnipotent cauſe, and by theſe motions, their almighty mover.

History of the World.

BACON.

(Between 1561 *and* 1626.)

Revenge is a kind of wild juſtice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as to the firſt wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of that wrong putteth the law out of office. Certainly in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in paſſing it over he is ſuperior: for it is a prince's part to pardon. And Solomon, I am ſure, ſaith, "It is the glory of a man to paſs by an offence." That which is paſt, is gone, and irrecoverable: and wiſe men have enough to do with things preſent, and to come: therefore they do but trifle with themſelves, that labour in paſt matters. There is no man doth a wrong for the wrong's ſake, but thereby to purchaſe himſelf profit or pleaſure, or honour, or the like. Therefore why ſhould I be angry with a man for loving himſelf better than me? and if any man ſhould do wrong merely out of ill nature, why? yet it is but like the thorn or bryar, which prick and ſcratch, becauſe they can do no other. The moſt tolerable ſort of revenge, is for thoſe wrongs which there is no law to remedy: but then let a man take heed, that the revenge be ſuch as there is no law to puniſh; elſe a man's enemy is ſtill before-hand, and it is two for one. Some when they take revenge, are deſirous the party ſhould know whence it cometh. This is the more generous: for the delight ſeemeth to be, not ſo much in doing the hurt, as in making the party repent. But baſe and crafty cowards are like the arrow that flieth in the dark. Coſmus Duke of Florence had a deſperate ſaying againſt perfidious or neglecting friends, as if their wrongs were unpardonable: "You ſhall read (ſaith he) that we are commanded to forgive our enemies; but you never read, that we are commanded to forgive our friends." But yet the ſpirit of Job was in a better tune: "Shall we (ſaith he) take good at God's hand, and not be content to take evil alſo?" And ſo of friends in a proportion. This is certain, that a man that ſtudieth revenge, keeps his own wounds green, which otherwiſe would heal and do well. Public revenges are for the moſt part fortunate, as that for the death of Cæſar, for the death of Pertinax, for the death of Henry

the third of France, and many more. But in Private revenges it is not so. Nay, rather vindicative persons live the life of witches who as they are mischievous, so end they unfortunate. *Essays, or Counsels Civil and Moral.*

JONSON.

(Between 1574 and 1637)

For a man to write well, there are required three necessaries; to read the best authors; observe the best speakers; and much exercise of his own stile. In stile to consider what ought to be written; and after what manner: he must first think, and excogitate his matter; then choose his words, and examine the weight of either. Then take care in placing, and ranking both matter and words; that the composition be comely; and to do this with diligence and often. No matter how slow the stile be at first, so it be laboured and accurate; seek the best, and be not glad of the forward conceits, or first words, that offer themselves to us; but judge of what we invent, and order what we approve. Repeat often what we have formerly written; which, beside that it helps the consequence, and makes the juncture better, it quickens the heat of imagination, that often cools in the time of setting down, and gives it new strength, as if it grew lustier, by the going back. As we see in the contention of leaping, they jump farthest, that fetch their race largest: or, as in throwing a dart or javelin, we force back our arms, to make our locse the stronger. Yet, if we have a fair gale of wind, I forbid not the steering out of our sail, so the favour of the gale deceive us not. For all that we invent, doth please us in the conception or birth; else we should never set it down. But the safest is to return to our judgment, and handle over again those things, the easiness of which might make them justly suspected. So did the best writers in their beginnings; they imposed upon themselves care and industry. They did nothing rashly. They obtained first to write well, and then custom made it easy and a habit. By little and little, their matter shewed itself to them more plentifully, their words answered, their composition followed; and all, as in a well-ordered family, presented itself in the place. So that the sum of all is; ready

writing makes not good writing but good writing brings on ready writing: yet when we think we have got the faculty, it is even then good to reſiſt it; as to give a horſe a check ſometimes with a bit, which doth not ſo much ſtop his courſe, as ſtir his mettle. *Diſcoveries.*

HOOKER.

(Between 1553 *and* 1600.)

They of whom God is altogether unapprehended, are but few in number, and for groſſneſs of parts ſuch, that they hardly and ſcarcely ſeem to hold the place of humain beings. Theſe we ſhould judge to be of all others moſt miſerable, but that a wretcheder ſort there are, on whom whereas nature hath beſtowed riper capacity, their evil diſpoſition ſeriouſly goeth about therewith to apprehend God, as being not God. Whereby it cometh to paſs, that of theſe two ſorts of men, both godleſs, the one having utterly no knowledge of God, the other ſtudy how to perſuade themſelves that there is no ſuch thing to be known. The fountain and well-ſpring of which impiety is a reſolved purpoſe of mind to reap in this world what ſenſual profit or pleaſure ſoever the world yieldeth, and not to be barred from any whatſoever means available thereunto: And that that is the very radical cauſe of their atheiſm, no man (I think) will doubt, which conſidereth what pains they take to deſtroy thoſe principal ſpurs and motives unto all virtue, the creation of the world, the providence of God, the reſurrection of the dead, the joys of the kingdom of heaven, and the endleſs pains of the wicked, yea above all things, the authority of the Scripture, becauſe on theſe points it commone beateth, and the ſoul's immortality, which granted, draweth eaſily after it the reſt, as a voluntary train. Is it not wonderful, that baſe deſires ſhould ſo extinguiſh in men the ſenſe of their own excellency, as to make them willing that their ſouls ſhould be like to the ſouls of beaſts, mortal and corruptible with their bodies? Till ſome admirable or unuſual accident happen (as it hath in ſome) to work the be-

* The reader will meet with few *diſcoveries* in the paſſage now quoted: ſeveral of the obſervations contained in it are borrowed from Quinctilian.

ginning of a better alteration in their minds, disputation about the knowledge of God with such kind of persons commonly prevaileth little. For how should the brightness of wisdom shine, where the windows of the soul are of very set purpose closed? True religion hath many things in it, the only mention whereof galleth and troubleth their minds. Being therefore loth that enquiry into such matters should breed a persuasion in the end contrary to that they embrace, it is their endeavour to banish, as much as in them lieth, quite and clean from their cogitation whatsoever may sound that way. But it cometh many times to pass (which is their torment) that the thing they shun doth follow them; truth, as it were, even obtruding itself into their knowledge, and not permitting them to be so ignorant as they would be. Whereupon, in as much as the nature of man is unwilling to continue doing that wherein it shall always condemn itself, they continuing still obstinate to follow the course which they have begun, are driven to devise all the shifts that wit can invent for the smothering of this light, all that may with any but the least shew of possibility lay their minds from thinking that true, which they heartily wish were false, but cannot think it so, without some struggle and fear of the contrary.

Ecclesiastical Polity.

HOBBES.

(*Between* 1588 *and* 1679.)

The cause of dreams (if they be natural) are the actions or violence of the inward parts of a man upon his brain, by which the passages of sense, by sleep benumbed, are restored to their motion. The signs by which this appeareth to be so, are the differences of dreams (old men commonly dream oftener, and have their dreams more painful than young) proceeding from the different accidents of man's body; as dreams of lust, as dreams of anger, according as the heart, or other parts within, work more or less upon the brain, by more or less heat; so also the descent of different sorts of flegm maketh us a dream of different tastes of meats and drinks; and I believe there is a reciprocation of motion from the brain to the vital parts, and back from the vital parts to the brain; whereby not only imagination begeteth

motion in these parts, but also motion in these parts begeteth imagination like to that which it was begotten. If this be true, and that sad imaginations nourish the spleen, then we see also a cause, why a strong spleen reciprocally causeth fearful dreams, and why the effects of lasciviousness may in a dream produce the image of some person that had caused them. Another sign that dreams are caused by the action of the inward parts, is the disorder and casual consequence of one conception or image to another: for when we are waking, the antecedent thought or conception introduceth, and is cause of the consequent, (as the water followeth a man's dry finger upon a dry and level table) but in dreams there is commonly no coherence (and when there is, it is by chance) which must needs proceed from this, that the brain in dreams is not restored to its notion in every part alike; whereby it cometh to pass, that our thoughts appear like the stars between the flying clouds, not in the order in which a man would chuse to observe them, but as the uncertain flight of broken clouds permits.

Human Nature.

MILTON.

(*Between* 1608 *and* 1674.)

The end of learning is to repair the ruin of our first parents, by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue; which being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection. But because our understandings cannot in this body found itself but on sensible things, nor arrive so clearly to the knowledge of God and things invisible, as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same method is necessarily to be followed in discreet teaching. And seeing every nation affords not experience and tradition enough for all kinds of learning, therefore we are chiefly taught the languages of those people who have at any time been most industrious after wisdom; so that language is but the instrument conveying to us things useful to be known. And tho' a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet, if he had not studied the solid things in them as well

as the words and lexicons, he were nothing to be so much esteem'd a learned man, as any yeoman or tradesman competently wise in his mother dialect only. Hence appear the many mistakes which have made learning generally so unpleasing and so unsuccessful: first we do amiss to spend seven or eight years merely in scraping together so much miserable Latin and Greek, as might be learnt otherwise easily and delightly in one year. And that which casts our proficiency therein so much behind, is our time lost partly in too oft idle vacancies given both to schools and universities, partly in a preposterous exaction, forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses, and orations, which are the acts of ripest judgment, and the final work of a head fill'd by long reading and observing, with elegant maxims and copious invention. These are not matters to be wrung from poor striplings, like blood out of the nose, or the plucking of untimely fruit. *Tractate of Education.*

COWLEY.

(Between 1618 and 1667.)

The first minister of state has not so much business in public, as a wise man has in private; if the one have little leasure to be alone, the other has less leisure to be in company; the one has part of the affairs of one nation, the other all the works of God and nature under his consideration. There is no saying mocks me so much as that which I hear very often. That a man does not know how to pass his time. 'Twould have been but ill spoken by Methusalem in the nine hundred sixty ninth year of his life: so far it is from us, who have not time enough to attain to the utmost perfection of any part of any science, to have cause to complain that we are forced to be idle for want of work. But this, you'll say, is work only for the learned: others are not capable either of the employments or divertisements that arrive from letters. I know they are not; and therefore cannot much recommend solitude to a man totally illiterate. But if any man be so unlearned as to want entertainment of the little intervals of accidental solitude, which frequently occur in almost all conditions (except the very meanest of the people, who have business enough in the very provisions of life) it is truly a great shame both to his pa-

rents and himſelf; for a very ſmall portion of any ingenious art will ſtop up all thoſe gaps of our time; either muſic, or painting, or deſigning, or chymiſtry, or hiſtory, or gardening, or twenty other things will do it uſefully and pleaſantly; and if he happen to ſet his affections upon poetry (which I do not adviſe him to immediately) that will overdo it; no wood will be thick enough to hide him from the importunities of company or buſineſs, which would abſtract him from his beloved. *Discourses by way of Essays.*

HALE.

(Between 1600 and 1675.)

There are two great duties that we owe unto God, which are never out of ſeaſon, but ſuch as we have continual occaſion and neceſſity to uſe whilſt we live; namely prayer and thankſgiving.

Prayer is always ſeaſonable in this life, becauſe we ever ſtand in need of it: we always want ſomething, and have always occaſion to fear ſomething: although we could be ſuppoſed in ſuch a ſtate of happineſs in this world, that we could not ſay we wanted any thing, yet we have cauſe to pray for the continuance of the happineſs we enjoy, which is not fixed and ſtable but that it may leave us: "I ſaid in my proſperity I ſhall never be moved; thou hideſt thy face and I was troubled." We are never out of the reach of divine providence, either to relieve or afflict us; and therefore we are under a continual neceſſity of prayer, either to relieve and ſupply us, at leaſt to preſerve and uphold us.

Thankſgiving is likewiſe always ſeaſonable, becauſe we are never without ſomething thatwe receive from the divine goodneſs, that deſerves and requires our thankfulneſs. It may be we want wealth, yet have we not health? if we want both, yet have we not life? if we want temporal bleſſings, yet have we not eternal everlaſting bleſſings? If we have any thing that is comfortable to, or convenient for us, we have it from the goodneſs and bounty of God. And though we have not all we would, yet we have what we deſerve not, and what we prize and value; and therefore while we have any thing, we have occaſion of thankſgiving to our great benefactor. *Contemplations Moral and Divine.*

BROWNE.

(Between 1605 *and* 1682.*)*

I could never divide myſelf from any man upon the difference of an opinion, or be angry with his judgment for not agreeing with me in that, from which perhaps within a few days I ſhould diſſent myſelf: I have no genius to diſputes in religion, and have often though it wiſdom to decline them, eſpecially upon a diſadvantage, or when the cauſe of truth might ſuffer in the weakneſs of my patronage: where we deſire to be informed, 'tis good to conteſt with men above ourſelves; but to confirm and eſtabliſh our opinions, 'tis beſt to argue with judgments below our own, that the frequent ſpoils and victories over their reaſons may ſettle in ourſelves an eſteem, and confirmed opinion of our own. Every man is not a proper champion for truth, nor fit to take up the gauntlet in the cauſe of verity: Many from the ignorance of theſe maxims, and an inconſiderate zeal unto truth, have too raſhly charged the troops of error, and remain as trophies unto the enemies of truth: A man may be in as juſt poſſeſſion of truth as of a city, and yet be forced to ſurrender; 'tis therefore far better to enjoy her with peace, than to hazard her on a battle. *Religio Medici.*

TEMPLE.

(Between 1629 *and* 1700.*)*

The ſafety and firmneſs of any frame of government may be beſt judged by the rules of architecture, which teach us that the pyramid is of all figures the firmeſt, and leaſt ſubject to be ſhaken or overthrown by any concuſſions or accidents from the earth or air; and it grows ſtill ſo much the firmer, by how much broader the bottom and ſharper the top.

The ground upon which all government ſtands, is the conſent of the people or the greateſt or ſtrongeſt part of them; whether this proceed from reflexions upon what is paſt, by the reverence of any authority under which they and their anceſtors have for many ages been born and bred: or from a ſenſe of what is preſent, by the eaſe, plenty, and ſafety they enjoy; or from opinions of what is to come, by

the fear they have from the preſent government, or hopes from another. Now that government which by any of theſe, or by all theſe ways, takes in the conſent of the general number of the people, and conſequently their deſires and reſolutions to ſupport it, may juſtly be ſaid to have the broadeſt bottom, and to ſtand upon the largeſt compaſs of ground; and, if it terminate in the authority of one ſingle perſon, it may likewiſe be ſaid to have the narroweſt top, and ſo to make the figure of the firmeſt ſort of pyramid.

Eſſay on Government.

DRYDEN,

(Between 1631 and 1701.)

'Tis not only commended by antient practice, to celebrate the memory of great and worthy men, as the beſt thanks which poſterity can pay them; but alſo the examples of virtue are of more vigour, when they are thus contracted into individuals. As the ſun-beams, united in a burning glaſs to a point, have greater force than when they are darted from a plain ſuperfices; ſo the virtues and actions of one man, drawn together in a ſingle ſtory, ſtrike upon our minds a ſtronger and more lively impreſſion, than the ſcattered relations of many men, and many actions; and by the ſame means that they give us pleaſure, they afford us profit too.—For when the underſtanding is intent and fixed on a ſingle thing, it carries cloſer to the mark; every part of the object ſinks into it, and the ſoul receives it unmixt and whole.—For this reaſon Ariſtotle commends the unity of action in a poem; becauſe the mind is not capable of digeſting many things at once, nor of conceiving fully any more than one idea at a time. Whatſoever diſtracts the pleaſure leſſens it. And as the reader is more concerned at one man's fortune than thoſe of many; ſo likewiſe the writer is more capable of making a perfect work, if he confine himſelf to this narrow compaſs. The lineaments, features, and colourings, of a ſingle picture, may be hid exactly; but in a hiſtory-piece of many figures, the general deſign, the ordinance or diſpoſition of it, the relation of one figure to another, the diverſity of poſture, habits, ſhadowings, and all the other graces conſpiring to an uniformity, are of ſo difficult performance, that neither is the reſemblance of particular per-

ſons often perfect, nor the beauty of the piece complete: For any conſiderable error in the parts, renders the whole diſagreeable and lame. Thus then the perfection of the work, and the benefit ariſing from it are more abſolute in biography than in hiſtory. *Life of Plutarch.*

SHAFTESBURY.

(Between 1621 and 1683.)

Notwithſtanding there may be implanted in the heart a real ſenſe of right and wrong, a real good affection towards the ſpecies or ſociety; yet, by the violence of rage, luſt, or any other counter-working paſſion, this good affection may frequently be controuled and overcome. Where therefore there is nothing in the mind capable to render ſuch ill paſſions the objects of its averſion, and cauſe them earneſtly to be oppoſed: it is apparent how much a good temper in time may ſuffer, and a character by degrees change for the worſe. But if religion interpoſing, creates a belief that the ill paſſions of this kind, no leſs than their conſequent actions, are the objects of a Deity's animadverſion; it is certain that ſuch a belief muſt prove a ſeaſonable remedy againſt vice, and be in a particular manner advantageous to virtue. For a belief of this kind muſt be ſuppoſed to tend conſiderably towards the calming of the mind, and diſpoſing or fitting the perſon to a better recollection of himſelf, and to a ſtricter obſervance of that good and virtuous principle, which needs only his attention, to engage him wholly in its party and intereſt. *Inquiry Concerning Virtue.*

ADDISON.

(Between 1692 and 1719.)

Man, conſidered in himſelf, is a very helpleſs and a very wretched being. He is ſubject every moment to the greateſt calamities and misfortunes. He is beſet with dangers on all ſides, and may become unhappy by numberleſs caſualties, which he could not foreſee, nor have prevented, had he foreſeen them.

It is our comfort, while we are obnoxious to ſo many accidents, that we are under the care of one who directs con-

tingoncies, and has in his hands the management of every thing that is capable of annoying or offending us; who knows the assistance we stand in need of, and is always ready to bestow it on those who ask it of him.

The natural homage which such a creature bears to so infinitely wise and good a being, is a firm reliance on him for the blessings and conveniencies of life, and an habitual trust in him for deliverance out of all such dangers and difficulties as may befal us. *Spectator.*

ARBUTHNOT.

(Between 1670 and 1735.)

If we consider, to what perfection we now know the courses, periods, order, distances, and proportions of the several great bodies of the universe, at least such as fall within our view; we shall have cause to admire the sagacity and industry of the mathematicians, and the power of numbers and geometry well apply'd. Let us cast our eyes backward, and consider astronomy in its infancy; or rather let us suppose it still to begin: for instance, a colony of rude country people, transplanted into an island remote from the commerce of all mankind, without so much as the knowledge of the kalender, and the periods of the seasons, without instruments to make observations, or any the least notion of observation or instruments. When is it, we could expect any of their posterity should arrive at the art of predicting an eclipse? Not only so, but the art of reckoning all eclipses that are past or to come for any number of years? When is it, we should suppose, that one of these islanders transported to any other part of the earth, should be able by the inspection of the heavens to find how much he were south or north, east or west of his own island, and to conduct his ship back thither? For my part, though I know this may be, and is daily done, by what is known in astronomy; yet when I consider the vast industry, sagacity, multitude of observations, and other extrinsick things necessary for such a sublime piece of knowledge, I should be apt to pronounce it impossible, and never to be hoped for. Now we are let so much into the knowledge of the machine of the universe, and motion of its parts by the rules of this science, perhaps the invention may seem easy. But when we reflect,

what penetration and contrivance were neceſſary to lay the foundation of ſo great and extenſive an art, we cannot but admire its firſt inventors.

Eſſay on Mathematical Learning.

POPE.

(Between 1688 and 1744.)

Homer is univerſally allowed to have the greateſt invention of any writer whatever. The praiſe of judgment, Virgil has juſtly conteſted with him, and others may have their pretenſions as to particular excellencies; but his invention remains yet unrivalled. Nor is it a wonder if he has ever been acknowledged the greateſt of poets, who moſt excelled in that which is the very foundation of poetry. It is the invention that in different degrees diſtinguiſhes all great geniuſes: the utmoſt ſtretch of human ſtudy, learning, and induſtry, which maſter every thing beſides, can never attain to this. It furniſhes art with all her materials; and, without it judgment itſelf can at beſt but *steal wisely*: for art is only like a prudent Steward that lives on managing the riches of nature. Whatever praiſes may be given to works of judgment, there is not even a ſingle beauty in them, to which the invention muſt not contribute. As in the moſt regular gardens, art can only reduce the beauties of nature to more regularity, and ſuch a figure, which the common eye may better take in, and is therefore more entertained with. And perhaps the reaſon why common critics are inclined to prefer a judicious and methodical genius to a great and fruitful one, is, becauſe they find it eaſier for themſelves to purſue their obſervations through an uniform and bounded walk of art, than to comprehend the vaſt and various extent of nature.

Our author's walk is a wild paradiſe, where if we cannot ſee all the beauties ſo diſtinctly as in an ordered garden, it is only becauſe the number of them is infinitely greater. 'Tis like a copious nurſery which contains the ſeeds and firſt productions of every kind, out of which thoſe who followed him have but ſelected ſome particular plants, each according to his fancy, to cultivate and beautify. If ſome things are too luxuriant, it is owing to the richneſs of the ſoil;

and if others are not arrived to perfection and maturity, it is only becauſe they are over-run and oppreſſed by thoſe of a ſtronger nature. *Preface to Homer's Iliad.*

SWIFT.

(Between 1667 and 1745.)

It is likewiſe urged, that there are, by computation, in this kingdom, above ten thouſand parſons; whoſe revenues, added to thoſe of my lords the biſhops, would ſuffice to maintain at leaſt two hundred young gentlemen of wit, and pleaſure, and free-thinking; enemies to prieſt-craft, narrow principles, pedantry, and prejudices; who might be an ornament to the court and town: and then again, ſo great a number of able (bodied) divines, might be a recruit to our fleets and armies. This indeed appears to be a conſideration of ſome weight: but then, on the other hand, ſeveral things deſerve to be conſidered likewiſe: as, firſt, whether it may not be thought neceſſary, that in certain tracts of country, like what we call pariſhes, there ſhould be *one* man at leaſt, of abilities to read and write. Then, it ſeems a wrong computation, that the revenues of the church throughout this iſland would be large enough to maintain two hundred young gentlemen, or even half that number, after the preſent refined way of living; that is to allow each of them ſuch a rent, as, in the modern form of ſpeech, might make them *eaſy*. But ſtill there is in this project a greater miſchief behind; and we ought to beware of the woman's folly, who killed the hen, that every morning laid her a golden egg. For pray what would become of the race of men in the next age, if we had nothing to truſt to, beſides the ſcrophulous conſumptive productions furniſhed by our men of wit and pleaſure; when, having ſquandered away their vigour, health and eſtates, they are forced, by ſome diſagreeable marriage, to piece up their broken fortunes, and entail rottenneſs and politeneſs on their poſterity?

Argument against Abolishing Chriſtianity.

BERKELEY.

(Between 1684 and 1753.)

As the whole earth, and the entire duration of thoſe periſhing things contained in it, is altogether inconſiderable, or, in the prophet's expreſſive ſtyle *less than nothing*, in reſpect of eternity; who ſees not, that every reaſonable man ought ſo to frame his actions, as that they may moſt effectually contribute to promote his eternal intereſt? and ſince it is a truth evident by the light of nature, that there is a ſovereign owniſcient ſpirit, who alone can make us for ever happy or for ever miſerable; it plainly follows, that a comformity to his will, and not any proſpect of temporal advantage, is the ſole rule whereby every man who acts up to the principles of reaſon, muſt govern and ſquare his actions.—The ſame concluſion doth likewiſe evidently reſult from the relation which God bears to his creatures. God alone is maker and preſerver of all things: He is therefore with the moſt undoubted right the great legiſlator of the world; and mankind are, by all the ties of duty, no leſs than intereſt, bound to obey his laws.

Hence we ſhould above all things endeavour to trace out the divine will, or the general deſign of Providence, with regard to mankind, and the methods moſt directly tending to the accompliſhment of that deſign. And this ſeems the genuine and proper way for diſcovering the laws of nature. For laws being rules directive of our actions to the end intended by the legiſlator; in order to attain the knowledge of God's laws, we ought firſt to enquire, what that end is which he deſigns ſhould be carried on by human actions.—Now as God is a being of infinite goodneſs, it is plain, the end he propoſes is good. But God enjoying in himſelf all poſſible perfection, it follows, that it is not his own good, but that of his creatures. Again, the moral actions of men are entirely terminated within themſelves, ſo as to have no influence on the other orders of intelligences or reaſonable creatures: the end therefore to be procured by them, can be no other than the good of men. But as nothing in a natural ſtate can entitle one man more than another to the favour of God, except only moral goodneſs; which, conſiſting in a conformity to the laws of God, doth preſume the being of ſuch laws; and law ever ſuppoſing an end to which it

guides our actions; it follows, that antecedent to the end propoſed by God, no diſtinction can be conceived between men; that end therefore itſelf, or general deſign of Providence, is not determined or limited by any reſpect of perſons: it is not therefore the private good of this or that man, nation, or age, but the general well-being of all men, of all nations, of all ages of the world, which God deſigns ſhould be procured by the concurring actions of each individual. *Diſcourse on Paſſive Obedience.*

BOLINGBROKE.

(Between 1672 *and* 1751.)

The limitations neceſſary to preſerve liberty under monarchy will reſtrain effectually a bad prince, without being ever felt as ſhackles by a good one. Our conſtitution is brought, or almoſt brought, to ſuch a point, or perfection I think it, that no king, who is not, in the true meaning of the word, a patriot, can govern Britain with eaſe, ſecurity, honor, dignity, or indeed with ſufficient power and ſtrength. But yet a king, who is a patriot, may govern with all the former; and beſides them, with power as extended as the moſt abſolute monarch can boaſt; and a power, too, far more agreeable in the enjoyment, as well as more effectual in the operation.

On this ſubject let the imagination range through the whole glorious ſcene of a patriot reign; the beauty of the idea will inſpire thoſe tranſports, which Plato imagined the viſion of virtue would inſpire, if virtue could be ſeen. What in truth can be ſo lovely? what ſo venerable, as to contemplate a king on whom the eyes of a whole people are fixed, filled with admiration, and glowing with affection? a king, in the temper of whoſe government, like that of Nerva, things ſo ſeldom allied as empire and liberty are intimately mixed, co-exiſt together inſeparable, and conſtitute one real eſſence? What ſpectacle can be preſented to the view of the mind ſo rare, ſo nearly divine, as a king poſſeſſed of abſolute power, neither aſſumed by fraud nor maintained by force, but the genuine effect of eſteem, of confidence, and affection; the free gift of Liberty, who finds her greateſt ſecurity in this power, and would deſire no other if the prince

on the throne could be, what his people wish him to be, immortal? Of such a prince, and of such a prince alone, it may be said with strict propriety and truth,

——————————— volentes
Per populos dat jura, viamque affectat Olympo.

Civil fury will have no place in this draught; or, if the monster is seen, he must be seen as Virgil describes him;

——————— centum vinctus ahenis.
Post tergum nodis, fremit horridus ore cruento.

He must be seen subdued, bound, chained, and deprived entirely of power to do hurt. In this place, concord will appear brooding peace and prosperity on the happy land, joy sitting in every face, content in every heart; a people unoppressed, undisturbed, unalarmed; busy to improve their private property and the public stock: fleets covering the ocean; bringing home wealth by the returns of industry, carrying assistance or terror abroad by the direction of wisdom; and asserting triumphantly the rights and the honour of Great Britain, as far as waters roll, and as winds can waft them. *Idea of a Patriot King.*

MIDDLETON.

(Between 1683 *and* 1750.*)*

But to speak my mind freely on the subject of consequences. I am not so scrupulous perhaps in my regard to them, as many of my profession are apt to be: my nature is frank and open, and warmly disposed, not only to seek, but to speak, what I take to be true; which disposition has been greatly confirmed by the situation, into which Providence has thrown me. For I was never trained to pace in the trammels of the church, nor tempted by the sweets of its preferments, to sacrifice the philosophic freedom of a studious, to the servile restraints of an ambitious life: and from this very circumstance, as often as I reflect upon it, I feel that comfort in my own breast, which no external honours can bestow. I persuade myself, that the life and faculties of man, at the best but short and limited, cannot be employed more rationally or laudably, than in the search of knowledge; and especially of that sort, which relates to our duty, and conduces to our happiness. I look upon the discovery of any thing which is true, as a va-

luable acquiſition to ſociety; which cannot poſſibly hurt, or obſtruct the good effect of any other truth whatſoever: for they all partake of one common eſſence, and neceſſarily co-incide with each other; and, like the drops of rain, which fall ſeparately into the river, mix themſelves at once with the ſtream, and ſtrengthen the general current.

Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, &c.

HUME.

(Between 1711 and 1776.)

Strafford, in paſſing from his apartment to Tower-hill, where the ſcaffold was erected, ſtopped under Laud's windows, with whom he had long lived in intimate friendſhip, and entreated the aſſiſtance of his prayers, in thoſe awful moments, which were approaching. The aged primate diſſolved in tears; and, having pronounced, with a broken voice, a tender bleſſing on his departing friend, ſunk into the arms of his attendants. Strafford, ſtill ſuperior to his fate, marched on with an elated countenance, and with an air even of greater dignity, than what uſually attended him. He wanted that conſolation, which commonly ſupports thoſe who periſh by the ſtroke of injuſtice and oppreſſion. He was not buoyed by glory, nor by the affectionate compaſſion of the ſpectators; yet his mind, erect and undaunted, found reſources within itſelf, and maintained its unbroken reſolution, amidſt the terrors of death, and the triumphant exultations of his miſguided enemies.

History of England.

ROBERTSON.

(Between 1721 and 1793.)

As ſoon as the ſun aroſe, all the boats were manned and armed. They rowed towards the iſland with the colours diſplayed, warlike muſic, and other martial pomp; and as they approached the coaſt, they ſaw it covered with a multitude of people, whom the novelty of the ſpectacle had drawn together, and whoſe attitudes and geſtures expreſſed wonder and aſtoniſhment at the ſtrange objects which preſented themſelves to their view. Columbus was the firſt European who ſet foot in the New World which he had diſcovered. He landed in a rich dreſs, with a naked ſword in his hand. His

men followed, and kneeling down, they all kiſſed the ground which they had ſo long deſired to ſee. They next erected a crucifix, and, proſtrating themſelves before it, returned thanks to God for conducting their voyage to ſuch an happy iſſue. They then took ſolemn poſſeſſion of the country for the crown of Caſtile and Leon, with all the formalities which the Portugueſe were accuſtomed to obſerve in acts of this kind in their new diſcoveries.

The Spaniards, while thus employed, were ſurrounded by many of the natives, who gazed, in ſilent admiration, upon actions which they did not comprehend, and of which they did not foreſee the conſequences. The dreſs of the Spaniards, the whiteneſs of their ſkins, their beards, their arms, appeared ſtrange and ſurpriſing. The vaſt machines in which they had traverſed the ocean, that ſeemed to move upon the waters with wings, and uttered a dreadful ſound reſembling thunder, accompanied with lightning and ſmoke, ſtruck them with ſuch terror, that they began to reſpect their new gueſts as a ſuperior order of beings, and concluded that they were children of the Sun, who had deſcended to viſit the earth. *History of America.*

GOLDSMITH.

(Between 1729 and 1774.)

Examine a ſavage in the hiſtory of his country and predeceſſors: you will find his warriors able to conquer armies, and his ſages acquainted with more than poſſible knowledge: human nature is to him an unknown country; he thinks it capable of great things, becauſe he is ignorant of its boundaries: whatever can be conceived to be done, he allows to be poſſible, and whatever is poſſible, he conjectures muſt have been done. He never meaſures the actions and powers of others, by what himſelf is able to perform, nor makes a proper eſtimate of the greatneſs of his fellows, by bringing it to the ſtandard of his own incapacity. He is ſatisfied to be one of a country where mighty things have been; and imagines the fancied powers of others reflect a luſtre on himſelf. Thus, by degrees he loſes the idea of his own inſignificance, in a confuſed notion of the extraordinary powers of humanity, and is willing to grant extraordinary gifts to every pretender, becauſe unacquainted with their claim.

This is the reaſon why demi-gods and heroes have ever been erected in times or countries of ignorance and barbarity; they addreſſed a people who had high opinions of human nature, becauſe they were ignorant how far it could extend; they addreſſed a people who were willing to allow that men ſhould be gods, becauſe they were yet imperfectly acquainted with God and with man. Theſe impoſtors knew, that all men are naturally fond of ſeeing ſomething very great, made from the little materials of humanity; that ignorant nations are not more proud of building a tower to reach heaven, or a pyramid to laſt for ages, than of raiſing up a demi-god of their own country and creation. The ſame pride that erects a coloſſus or a pyramid, inſtals a god or an hero: but though the adoring ſavage can raiſe his coloſſus to the clouds, he can exalt the hero not one inch above the ſtandard of humanity; incapable therefore of exalting the idol, he debaſes himſelf and falls proſtrate before him.

Citizen of the World.

JOHNSON.

(Between 1706 *and* 1784.*)*

The place, which the wiſdom or policy of antiquity had deſtined for the reſidence of the Abyſſinian princes, was a ſpacious valley in the kingdom of Amhara, ſurrounded on every ſide by mountains, of which the ſummits overhang the middle part. The only paſſage, by which it could be entered, was a cavern that paſſed under a rock, of which it had long been diſputed whether it was the work of nature or of human induſtry. The outlet of the cavern was concealed by a thick wood, and the mouth which opened into the valley was cloſed with gates of iron, forged by the artificers of ancient days, ſo maſſy that no man without the help of engines could open or ſhut them.

From the mountains on every ſide, rivulets deſcended that filled all the valley with verdure and fertility, and formed a lake in the middle inhabited by fiſh of every ſpecies, and frequented by every fowl whom nature has taught to dip the wing in water. The lake diſcharged its ſuperfluities by a ſtream which entered a dark cleft of the mountain on the northern ſide, and fell with dreadful noiſe from precipice to precipice till it was heard no more.

The ſides of the mountains were covered with trees, the banks of the brooks were diverſified with flowers; every blaſt ſhook ſpices from the rocks, and every month dropped fruits upon the ground. All animals that bite the graſs, or browſe the ſhrub, whether tame or wild, wandered in this extenſive circuit, ſecured from beaſts of prey by the mountains which confined them. On one part were flocks and herds feeding in the paſtures, on another all the beaſts of chace friſking in the lawns; the ſprightly kid was bounding on the rocks, the ſubtle monkey frolicking in the trees, and the ſolemn elephant repoſing in the ſhade. All the diverſities of the world were brought together, the bleſſings of nature were collected, and its evils extracted and excluded.

Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia.

STUART.

(Between 1742 *and* 1786.*)*

The knight while he acquired, in the company of the ladies, the graces of external behaviour, improved his natural ſenſibility and tenderneſs. He ſmoothed over the roughneſs of war with politeneſs. To be rude to a lady, or to ſpeak to her diſadvantage, was a crime which could not be pardoned. He guarded her poſſeſſions from the rapacious, and maintained her reputation againſt ſlander. The uncourteous offender was driven from the ſociety of the valiant; and the interpoſition of the fair was often neceſſary to protect him from death. But the courteſy of the knight, though due in a peculiar manner to the female ſex, extended itſelf to all the buſineſs and intercourſe of civil life. He ſtudied a habitual elegance of manners. Politeneſs became a knightly virtue; it even attended him to the field of battle, and checked his paſſions in the ardour of victory. The generoſity and the delicate attentions he ſhewed to the enemy he had vanquiſhed, are a ſatire on the warriors of antiquity. His triumphs were diſgraced by no indecent joy, no brutal ferocity. Courteous and generous in the general ſtrain of his conduct, refined to extravagance in his gallantry to the ladies, and declared protector of religion and innocence, he was himſelf to be free from every ſtain. His rank, his duties, and his cares, made him aim at the perfection of virtue.

View of Society in Europe.

GIBBON.

(Between 1737 and 1794.)

The rage of the Donatists was enflamed by a phrenzy of a very extraordinary kind; and which, if it really prevailed among them in so extravagant a degree, cannot surely be paralleled in any country, or in any age. Many of these fanatics were possessed with the horror of life and the desire of martyrdom; and they deemed it of little moment by what means, or by what hands, they perished, if their conduct was sanctified with the intention of devoting themselves to the glory of the true faith, and the hope of eternal happiness. Sometimes they rudely disturbed the festivals, and profaned the temples of paganism, with the design of exciting the most zealous of the idolaters to revenge the insulted honour of their gods. They sometimes forced their way into the courts of justice, and compelled the affrighted judge to give orders for their immediate execution. They frequently stopped travellers on the public highways, and obliged them to inflict the stroke of martyrdom, by the promise of a reward, if they consented, and by the threat of instant death, if they refused to grant so very singular a favour. When they were disappointed of every other resource, they announced the day on which, in the presence of their friends and brethren, they should cast themselves headlong from some lofty rock; and many precipices were shewn, which had acquired fame by the number of religious suicides.

History of the Roman Empire.

BURKE.

(Between 1729 and 1797.)

By a constitutional policy, working after the pattern of nature, we receive, we hold, we transmit our government, and our privileges, in the same manner in which we enjoy and transmit our property and lives. The institutions of policy, the goods of fortune, the gifts of Providence, are handed down to us and from us, in the same course and order. Our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world, and with the mode of existence decreed to a permanent body composed

of transitory parts; wherein, by the disposition of stupendous wisdom, moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race, the whole, at one time, is never old, or middle-aged, or young, but, in a condition of unchangeable constancy, moves on through the varied tenour of perpetual decay, fall, renovation, and progression. Thus, by preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the state, in what we improve we are never wholly new; in what we retain we are never wholly obsolete. By adhering in this manner, and on these principles to our forefathers, we are guided, not by the superstition of antiquaries, but by the spirit of philosophic analogy. In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable, and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars."

Reflections on the Revolution in France.

OBSERVATIONS

ON

EPISTOLARY WRITING.

EPISTOLARY writing possesses a kind of middle place between the serious and amusing species of composition. It appears, at first view, to stretch into a very wide field. For there is no subject whatever, on which a person may not convey his thoughts to the public, in the form of a letter. Shaftesbury, for instance, and several other writers, have chosen to give this form to philosophical treatises. But this circumstance is not sufficient to class such treatises under the head of epistolary composition. Though they are entitled "A letter to a friend," yet, after the first address, the friend disappears, and we perceive that it is, in truth, the public with whom the author corresponds. Seneca's

Epiſtles are of this deſcription. There is no probability that they ever paſſed in correſpondence as real letters. They are no other than miſcellaneous diſſertations on moral ſubjects; which the author, for his convenience, choſe to put into the epiſtolary form. Even where one writes a real letter on ſome formal topic, as of moral or religious conſolation, to a perſon under diſtreſs, ſuch as Temple has written to the Counteſs of Eſſex on the death of her daughter, he is at liberty on ſuch occaſions to write wholly as a divine or as a philoſopher, and to aſſume the ſtyle of the one or of the other, without reprehenſion. We conſider the author not as writing a familiar letter, but as compoſing a formal diſcourſe, ſuited to the peculiar circumſtances of ſome individual.

Epiſtolary writing becomes a diſtinct ſpecies of compoſition, ſubject to the cognizance of criticiſm, only, or chiefly, when it is of the eaſy and familiar kind; when it is converſation carried on upon paper, between two friends at a diſtance. Such an intercourſe, when well conducted, may be rendered very agreeable to readers of taſte. If the ſubject of the letters be important, they will be the more valuable. Even though there ſhould be nothing very conſiderable in the ſubject, yet if the ſpirit and turn of the correſpondence be agreeable; if they be written in a ſprightly manner, and with native grace and eaſe, they may ſtill be entertaining; more eſpecially if there be any thing to intereſt us in the characters of the writers,

Concerning the letters of eminent men, the public has always ſhewn an eminent degree of curioſity. We expect that their correſpondence will diſcover ſomething of their real character. It is indeed childiſh to expect, that in letters we are to find the whole heart of the writer unveiled. Concealment and diſguiſe take place, more or leſs, in all human intercourſe. But ſtill, as letters from one friend to another make the neareſt approach to converſation, we may expect to ſee more of a character diſplayed in theſe than in productions intended for public inſpection. We pleaſe ourſelves with beholding the writer in a ſituation which allows him to be at his eaſe, and to give vent occaſionally to the overflowings of his heart. When a writer has diſtinguiſhed himſelf in his ſtudied performances, and delighted us in thoſe works which he intended for our peruſal, we become inte-

ſeſted in all that concerns him, and wiſh to be acquainted with his ideas, as they flowed without any view to their publication, in the open communications of a private and friendly correſpondence. Beautiful minds, like beautiful bodies, appear graceful in an undreſs. The awe which they inſpire, when ſurrounded with all their dignity, is ſometimes more ſtriking than pleaſing; but we feel ourſelves relieved when admitted to their familiarity. We love to retire behind the ſcenes, and to obſerve the undiſguiſed appearance of thoſe who pleaſe us when induſtriouſly decorated for public exhibition.

Much, therefore, of the merit and the agreeableneſs of epiſtolary writing will depend on its introducing us into ſome acquaintance with the writer. Here, if any where, we look for the man, not for the author. Its firſt and fundamental requiſite is, to be natural and ſimple; for a ſtiff and laboured manner is as bad in a letter, as it is in converſation. This does not baniſh ſprightlineſs and wit. Theſe are graceful in letters, juſt as they are in converſation; when they flow eaſily, and without any appearance of ſtudy, when employed ſo as to ſeaſon, not to cloy.

Much has been ſaid concerning the epiſtolary ſtyle as if any one ſtyle could be appropriated to the great variety of ſubjects which are diſcuſſed in letters. Eaſe ſhould diſtinguiſh familiar letters, written on the common affairs of life; becauſe the mind is uſually at eaſe while they are compoſed. But even in theſe there may incidentally ariſe ſome topic that requires elevated language. Not to elevate our expreſſions on theſe occaſions, is to write unnaturally; for nature teaches us to expreſs animated emotions of every kind in animated language.

The impaſſioned lover writes unnaturally, if he writes with the eaſe of Sévigné. The dependant writes unnaturally to a ſuperior, if he adopts a ſtyle of familiarity. The ſuppliant writes unnaturally, if he rejects the figures dictated by diſtreſs. Converſation admits of every ſtyle but the poetic; and what are letters but written converſation? The great rule is, to follow nature, and to avoid an affected manner.

Eaſe and ſimplicity are ornaments to every ſpecies of compoſition. The moſt intereſting letters are commonly ſuch as have been written with the greateſt facility. What the

heart or the imagination dictates, may always be readily expreſſed: but where there is no ſubject to warm or intereſt theſe, conſtraint is apt to appear; and hence, thoſe letters of mere compliment, congratulation, or condolence, which have coſt the authors moſt labour in compoſing, and which, for that reaſon, they perhaps conſider as their maſter-pieces, never fail of being the moſt diſagreeable and inſipid to the reader.

It ought, however, to be remembered, that the eaſe and ſimplicity which I have recommended in epiſtolary correſpondence, are not to be underſtood as importing entire careleſſneſs. In writing to the moſt intimate friend, a certain degree of attention, both to the ſubject and the ſtyle, is requiſite and becoming. It is no more than what we owe to ourſelves, and to the friend with whom we correſpond. A ſlovenly and negligent manner of writing argues a want of due reſpect. The licence which ſome perſons aſſume, of writing letters with too careleſs a hand, is apt to betray them into imprudence in what they write. The firſt requiſite, both in converſation and correſpondence, is to attend to all the proper decorums which our own character and that of others demand. An imprudent expreſſion in converſation may be forgotten and paſs away; but when we take the pen in our hand, we muſt remember, "Litera ſcripta manet."

The Greeks remarkable as they were for diverſity of compoſition, have not left many models in the epiſtolary ſtyle. The epiſtles attributed to Socrates, Xenophon, Æſchines, Antiſthenes, Ariſtippus, and Philo, have never been popular. Thoſe which bear the name of Ariſtænetus are compoſed in a taſte leſs reſembling the Attic than the Oriental. The deſcriptions in them are poetically luxuriant, but the language is not pure, nor the ſtyle ſimple.

With regard to the Epiſtles aſcribed to Phalaris, various opinions have been entertained among the learned. They have been conſidered as genuine by Temple, Boyle, King, Swift, and many others; while Bentley has rejected them as ſpurious. It is now the opinion of thoſe who are beſt qualified to judge, that in this violent controverſy the victory was gained by Bentley.

This critic obſerves with his uſual acrimony, that Boyle made a bad book worſe by giving a bad edition of it.

The Letters of Cicero are the moſt valuable collection extant in any language. They are Letters of real buſineſs, written to the greateſt men of the age, compoſed with purity and elegance, but without the leaſt affectation; and, what adds greatly to their merit, written without any view to publication. It appears that he never retained copies of his own letters; and we are wholly indebted to the care of his freed-man Tiro, for the extenſive collection that was made after his death. They contain the moſt authentic materials of the hiſtory of that age; and are the laſt monuments which remain of Rome in its free ſtate; the greateſt part of them being written when the republic was on the brink of ruin. To his intimate friends, and eſpecially to Atticus, he lays open his heart with great freedom. In the courſe of his correſpondence with others, we are introduced into acquaintance with ſeveral of the principal perſonages of Rome: and it is remarkable that moſt of Cicero's correſpondents, as well as himſelf, are elegant and polite writers; a circumſtance which ſerves to heighten our idea of the taſte and manners of that age.

The epiſtles of the younger Pliny cannot without impropriety be termed *familiar*. For, though many of them are addreſſed to his moſt intimate friends, and relate to perſonal topics, yet, as we know that they were publiſhed by the writer himſelf after they had undergone his reviſion and correction, we may be aſſured that their purpoſe was not the ſimple effuſion of his mind. In fact, the evident deſign of almoſt every letter in the collection is, to diſplay the good qualities of the writer. They generally turn upon ſome act of munificence which he had performed, ſome inſtance of his literary or oratorical reputation, his attachment to ſtudy, his philoſophical temper of mind, his love of virtue, in ſhort, upon ſomething that may heighten his character in the idea of his correſpondent. His leading foible, indeed, the thirſt of applauſe, they very amply exhibit; for he neither wiſhed to conceal it, nor could he do ſo conſiſtently with his purpoſe of attaining applauſe. But we ſhall in vain look for any touches of nature which may make us acquainted in other reſpects with the man. All is ſo varniſhed with ſplendid ſentiments, and elegancies of thought and expreſſion, that no pecular features are diſcernible. The ſubject of every letter is a theme, on which the fineſt things are to be

ſaid; and we are ſometimes tempted to believe, that the benevolent or generous action which he relates, was either wholly fictitious, or performed for the expreſs purpoſe of diſplaying it to a friend in its faireſt colouring.

After the Latin had ceaſed to be a living language, many excellent collections of Epiſtles were compoſed in it. The learned men of different nations, whoſe rude dialects would not repay the labour of cultivation, wiſely choſe to communicate their thoughts in the pure language of the court of Auguſtus. Some of the earlieſt of theſe collections are diſgraced by the barbariſm of the times. But Petrarch ſhines amidſt the ſurrounding obſcurity. True genius, like his, could not but diſplay its luſtre, though it laboured under the diſadvantage of a prevailing corruption of taſte. His Latin ſtyle cannot be recommended as a model of purity.

Politian had alſo juſt pretenſions to native genius. There is a warmth and vigour in his poetry, which fully proves him to have poſſeſſed no common talents. His epiſtles are elegant, but, like thoſe of Pliny, whom he imitated, they are formal and affected.

But among the modern epiſtolary writers, the firſt rank is to be aſſigned to Eraſmus. His ſtyle indeed is not purely Ciceronian, though it diſplays many of the graces of Cicero's manner. He was not ſo ſcrupulouſly exact in his taſte, as to reject a barbarous and Gothic expreſſion, if it conveyed his idea with preciſion. But he had the ſkill to uſe it in ſuch a way, that it acquired, in his writings, a grace and dignity. No man was better acquainted with the works of Cicero, and no man entertained a higher opinion of his beauties, or knew better how to imitate them. But he deſpiſed the ſect of Ciceronians, who would ſcarcely admit a particle which was not to be found in their favourite author. In his dialogue entitled *Ciceronianus*, he has ridiculed them with admirable wit and eloquence; nor would he countenance ſuch affectation by any part of his writings. With all their defects in point of purity of language, his Letters are uncommonly entertaining: they poſſeſs that ſpirit which genius can always exhibit, but which laborious dulneſs vainly imitates.

I ſhall not here attempt to characteriſe a numerous claſs of epiſtolary writers who poſſeſs little merit of their own, and who have derived all their fame from a ſervile imitation of

Cicero. Paulus Manutius, one of these, is said to have spent a month in composing a single letter. We see, indeed, the consequence of this scrupulous attention, an elegant and truly Ciceronian phraseology; but we observe none of the native graces of unaffected composition.

The French have arrogated to themselves great merit as epistolary writers. Their genius and their language appear to be well adapted to this species of composition. But some of the most celebrated writers among them have renounced the advantages which nature gave them, and have destroyed all the beauties of sentiment and vivacity, by an unseasonable profusion of wit. Balzac wearies his reader with the constant recurrence of laboured ingenuity.

Voiture abounds with beautiful thoughts, expressed with great elegance. In other writers the language of compliment disgusts by its unmeaning sameness and formality. In him it has the grace of delicacy. But even he, though indisputably a fine writer, is justly censured by Bouhours, for thoughts which the critic calls false.

The Letters of Sévigné are now esteemed the most complete model of a familiar correspondence. They turn indeed very much upon trifles, the incidents of the day, and the news of the town; and they are overloaded with extravagant compliments, and expressions of fondness to her favourite daughter: but at the same time they shew such perpetual sprightliness, they contain such easy and varied narration, and so many strokes of the most lively and beautiful painting perfectly free from all affectation, that they are justly entitled to high praise.

The most distinguished collection of letters in the English language is that of Pope, Swift, and their friends. This collection is, on the whole, an entertaining and agreeable one; and contains much wit and refinement. It is not, however, free from the faults imputed to the Epistles of Pliny; it betrays too much study and labour. Yet we find not a few of these Letters written with great ease and simplicity. Those of Arbuthnot, in particular, are entitled to the highest praise*. Swift's also are unaffected; they ex-

* Arbuthnot was a man of great comprehension, skilful in his profession, versed in the sciences, acquainted with ancient literature, and able to animate his mass of know-

hibit his character with all its defects. It were to be wished, for the honour of his memory, that his epistolary correspondence had not been drained to the dregs, by so many successive publications as have been given to the world. Several of the Letters of Atterbury and Bolingbroke are written with a masterly hand. The censure of writing in too artificial a manner falls heaviest upon Pope himself. There is visibly more of study, and less of nature and the heart in his Letters, than in those of most of his correspondents.

It has been so long said as to be commonly believed, that the true characters of men may be found in their Letters, and that he who writes to his friend, lays his heart open before him. But the truth is, that such were the simple friendships of the Golden Age, and are now the friendships only of children. Very few can boast of hearts which they dare lay open to themselves, and of which, by whatever accident exposed, they do not shun a distinct and continued view: and certainly what we hide from ourselves, we do not shew to our friends. There is indeed no transaction which offers stronger temptations to fallacy and sophistication than epistolary intercourse. In the eagerness of conversation, the first emotions of the mind often burst out before they are considered; in the tumult of business, interest and passion have their genuine effect; but a friendly Letter is a calm and deliberate performance, in the cool of leisure, in the stillness of solitude; and surely no man sits down to depreciate by design his own character.

Friendship has no tendency to secure veracity in this case; for by whom can a man so earnestly wish to be thought better than he is, as by him whose kindness he desires to gain or keep? Even in writing to the world there is less constraint: the author is not confronted with his reader, and takes his chance of approbation among the different dispositions of mankind; but a Letter is addressed to a single mind, of which the prejudices and partialities are known; and must therefore please, if not by favouring them, at least by forbearing to expose them.

To charge those favourable representations which men

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ledge by a bright and active imagination; a scholar with great brilliance of wit; a wit who, in the crowd of life, retained and discovered a noble ardour of religious zeal.

Johnson's Life of Pope.

give of their own minds, with the guilt of hypocritical falſehood, would ſhew more ſeverity than knowledge. The writer commonly believes himſelf. Almoſt every man's thoughts, while they are general, are right; and moſt hearts are pure, while temptation is abſent. It is eaſy to awaken generous ſentiments in privacy; to deſpiſe death when there is no danger; to glow with benevolence when there is nothing to be given. While ſuch ideas are formed, they are felt; and ſelf-love does not ſuſpect the gleam of virtue to be a meteor of fancy.

If the Letters of Pope are conſidered merely as compoſitions, they ſeem to be premeditated and artificial. It is one thing to write, becauſe there is ſomething which the mind wiſhes to diſcharge; and another to ſolicit the imagination becauſe ceremony or vanity requires ſomething to be written. He is too fond of writing like a wit. His Letters to Ladies are full of affectation. The ſwelling ſentences which he occaſionally uſes might be tolerated in a formal harangue; but are very unſuitable to the ſtyle of one friend correſponding with another.

It is evident that his own importance often ſwells in his mind. He is afraid of writing, leſt the clerks of the Poſt-office ſhould know his ſecrets; he has many enemies; he conſiders himſelf as ſurrounded by univerſal jealouſy. "After many deaths, and many diſperſions, (ſays he) two or three of us may ſtill be brought together, not to plot, but to divert ourſelves, and the world too, if it pleaſes:" and they can live together, and "ſhew what friends wits may be, in ſpite of all the fools in the world." All this while, it was likely that the clerks did not know his hand; he certainly had no more enemies than a public character like his inevitably excites; and with what degree of friendſhip the wits might live, very few were ſo much fools as ever to inquire.

The Letters of Cheſterfield have been highly praiſed. As compoſitions, they indeed poſſeſs much elegance: but they ought never to be put into the hands of youth, without ſerious precautions againſt the tendency of that deteſtable ſyſtem of morality which they inculcate*. No man has

* An important ſervice has been rendered to the riſing generation by the judicious Dr. Gregory, who has taken

more closely imitated the French in every circumstance. Like them, he writes with perspicuity, vivacity, and that gracefulness which is sure to please, and which he so strenuously recommends. He is himself a proof of the efficacy of the graces; for, with all his merit, he was certainly superficial, and yet obtained a degree of fame which more solid writers have seldom enjoyed.

The letters of Montague are not unworthy of being ranked near those of Sevigne. They have much of the French ease and vivacity; and perhaps retain the character of agreeable epistolary style, more than any collection of Letters which has appeared in the English language†.

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the pains to purify Chesterfield's pages from every dangerous or exceptionable passage, and to present the youthful reader with all the usual parts, under the title of "*The Elements of a polite Education; carefully selected from the Letters of the late Right Hon. Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to his Son.*"

† Blair's Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Letters, lect. xxxvii. Aikin's Letters to his Son, vol. i. let. vi. Knox's, Essays, No. clxxi. Johnson's Life of Pope.

THE END.